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THE CHURCH AND ITS ORGANIZATION IN PRIMITIVE AND CATHOLIC TIMES. 8vo. 14s. net. Longmans, Green, and Co., New York, London, and Bombay. 1904.

GAUDIUM CRUCIS: A Meditation for Good Friday. 12mo. 3s. net. Longmans, Green, and Co., New York, London, and Bombay. 1905.

ABBA, FATHER

A Comment on the Lord's Prayer

BY

WALTER LOWRIE, M.A.

Rector of S. Paul's American Church
Rome

THE LORD'S PRAYER

OUR FATHER

WHICH IS IN HEAVEN

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TO
MY FRIEND
ELWOOD WORCESTER
TEACHER, PRIEST, AND
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PREFACE

ACQUAINTANCE with the Lord's Prayer and some just notion of its meaning is surely a part of 'the necessary erudition of a Christian man.' A prayer like this which is daily repeated, under divers conditions and in many moods, is illuminated in the course of time from various sides, and in the end becomes freighted with a store of associations. Any mature Christian ought to be able to give out of his own experience an instructive comment upon this text.

No one, so far as I know, has essayed this self-revealing task, though many have taken in hand to illustrate the Lord's Prayer by the collective devotional experience of other Christians. Neither of these things, however, do I here propose to do.

Our own experience, supplemented by the experience of others, is commonly the only ground upon which we can form a sound judgment. But in the sphere of our present inquiry a third factor comes into consideration,—namely, the experience of Jesus, which we agree to distinguish from the

common experience of Christendom, and exalt immeasurably above it. We who have entered the school of Jesus cannot be dispensed from hearkening directly to his voice. We have too often forgotten (what Jesus did not suffer his earliest disciples to forget), that, though we may compare with one another the acquirement of our individual experience, we dare call no man rabbi, master, or teacher, but Christ himself.¹ Our own religious experience must be not only quickened but corrected by the experience of Jesus.

It is the express aim of this book to illustrate the Lord's Prayer by the experience of Jesus as that is revealed in his teaching and in the history of his life. The most characteristic and essential features in the teaching of our Lord come to expression in the keywords of this prayer; and about this central part of Jesus' teaching—so far as the admission of the historical fact is concerned—most sober scholars are now substantially agreed.

As I am commenting, not upon an antiquated document, but upon our daily prayer, I endeavour to bring this text into relation with our own experience, conditioned as that is by the modern view of the world. Much of the teaching of Jesus, when

¹ Matt. 23 8, 10.

viewed in its historical objectivity, seems strange to us and remote. It is the duty of the preacher or interpreter to bring it near. To this task—being a preacher—I have applied myself with zeal. On completing the book, I perceive that more space has been given to such interpretation than was in the beginning intended. I cannot fail to recognise, moreover, that this is after all only *my* interpretation, my own individual apprehension of the teaching of Jesus. It may therefore be erroneous; it is sure to be incomplete; but, for all that, it is none the less real, for it is, in turn, the expression of a genuine and a personal experience.

So this book is not purely an historical study, neither is it merely a book of devotion. It aims at more than barely to explain the Lord's Prayer, yet it makes no pretension to account for the teaching of Jesus as a whole. This preface will explain my aim, and if it fail to justify what may seem a novel method, I would urge that the Lord's Prayer is a text of such great importance that it deserves comment of every sort and from every side.

Some persons are loth to conceive of Jesus' relation to his heavenly Father as a *religious* experience—as an experience in any wise comparable to ours. Yet prayer is unquestionably a religious

experience ; and Jesus prayed, addressing his Father in heaven in the same terms in which he has taught us to pray. Like us, he experienced God's will in contrast with his own, and to it he submitted with the lowliest meekness. If in thought and deed he conformed himself more perfectly to God's will than any man has ever done, this is merely to say that he encountered every religious experience except sin. Because he was tempted he is able also to sympathise with them that are tempted ; and by the experience of temptation without defeat he learned to know what sin is better than we know it who are tempted and fall. If this be not religion in very reality, but only a vain semblance of likeness to man and to the common experiences of humanity, then we have lost what was most precious to us in Jesus : we can no longer look to him as our exemplar. He is not the way, if in that sphere of experience which we call religion, where we most need a guide and a captain, the path in which he walked is not our path.

WALTER LOWRIE.

ROME, *April* 1908.

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ABBA, FATHER

CHAPTER I

THE LORD'S PRAYER IN GENERAL

SOMETHING must needs be said about the Lord's Prayer as a whole, lest in studying each several petition for itself we lose the sense of its unity and miss the apprehension of its totality and completeness.

1. The prayer which Jesus taught his disciples has often been compared with the Kaddish, the most popular formula of Jewish worship. The resemblance is striking, but the points of divergency are even more significant. Above all, we note the telling fact that the Jewish prayer did *not* begin with 'Abba, Father.' The first petition of the Kaddish reads like the prayer of our Lord, but with a significant addition, 'Hallowed be thy name *in the coming world.*' This strikes the keynote of the prayer, and every subsequent petition reflects the narrow nationalism of the Jewish messianic hope. In Jesus' prayer the thought of the coming kingdom and its attendant blessings is more essen-

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tial than we commonly perceive. But, instead of being narrow and national, every phrase is broadened into a universal expression of human desire.

After all, were the resemblance closer, it need cause us no surprise to find a parallel to the Lord's Prayer amongst the treasures of Hebrew devotion. For is not true prayer a discovery of the Jews? All men everywhere have prayed, but outside of Israel and the stream of influence which has flowed thence through Christianity and Islam we rarely find the record of a prayer which matches our conception of what prayer should be.

2. Jesus, however, in teaching his disciples to pray, warns them not only against the practice of the Gentiles but also against that of the Pharisees.¹ The Gentile cults he seems hardly to recognise as prayer: 'much speaking' is the ignominious term by which he characterises them. It was in fact broadly characteristic of the Greek and Roman religions that they ascribed all efficacy in prayer to the scrupulous recitation of prescribed formulae, couched in antique and often unintelligible phrase. What we now know as magic, and discriminate sharply from religion, is simply the persistent vestige of a gross notion of prayer which was common to all primitive cults. Magic and the early religions have in common the conception that the Godhead can be subjected to the suppliants' will

¹ Matt, 6 5-8.

by the due use of a certain form of words. We have learned recently, from the magical papyri found in Egypt, how prevalent this notion was in the early Christian centuries. The more fundamental part of this error has not yet been thoroughly eradicated even in Christendom. For do no Christians now resort to prayer as a means of conjuring the Deity and subduing the divine will to theirs? Is not this the implication of '*prevailing* with God in prayer,' which is commonly accounted a pious phrase?

The prayers of the Pharisees, on the other hand, Jesus did not so scornfully disparage. They were too 'long,' he thought, but they were not mere words. As a matter of fact, the contemporary Jewish prayers of which we have record were often noble expressions of religious adoration and desire. They were real prayers, yet, in spite of that, the Pharisees did not really pray. They made, said Jesus, their long prayers 'for a pretence.'¹ Not that these men, having that 'zeal for God' which St. Paul admits, commonly reached the last stretch of hypocrisy which knows no other motive of prayer but 'to be seen of men,'² and to impose upon them. They were, doubtless, unconscious hypocrites for the most part, and sought rather to impose their pretence upon God, with the sincere but mistaken

¹ Mark 12 40.

² Matt. 6 5.

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notion that the recitation of prayers is a *pious exercise*. For this the scorn of Jesus has branded them for ever. Do no Christians make such 'a pretence' in the recitation of their long prayers?

It is significant, I think, that our Lord nowhere enjoined prayer as a duty. He simply assumed it as an instinctive necessity of the religious life. He says, 'When ye pray.' It is certainly significant that he taught his disciples a very short prayer. Yet this very prayer has been abused in the ways which Jesus did most condemn, namely, in the ways of Jewish formalism and of Gentile superstition.

3. The character and intensity of Jesus' own religious life was shown pre-eminently in prayer. No place was too common or profane for the prayer of Jesus, but the mountain and the solitary place were the most congenial. The Pharisee regarded prayer as one of the chief works of righteousness. It was the more meritorious because it was not prescribed by the Law,—a work of supererogation. To Jesus, prayer was simply a necessity of life, as natural as breathing. Therefore, while condemning the prayers of the Jews, he encouraged his own disciples to pray,—only, he demanded more inwardness and reality in prayer.

Jesus taught men to 'worship the Father in spirit and truth.'¹ These words 'spirit and truth,' as St. John uses them, signify *reality*. Reality is

¹ John 4 23.

what Jesus found lacking in prayer. The desire which prompted the prayer might be real. How real, indeed, was the desire of the Jews for a national deliverance ! Yet the prayer was unreal because it did not establish a real relation with the ever-present God. To the Jews of Jesus' time God appeared so far remote from the world and seemed so indifferent to his people's fate that the worshipper could find no joy in prayer, nor attain any confidence that his prayer would be heard. What was left but to regard prayer as a pious and meritorious exercise ?

Little as Jesus says upon the express subject of prayer, almost the whole of his teaching may be applied to this point, for it is all designed to remove the principal obstacle to genuine prayer, the notion, namely, of the remoteness, the indifference, or the unreality of God. The heart of Jesus' teaching is the assurance of God's goodness, of his living presence in the world, and of man's instant relation to him.

This Jesus taught above all by the example of his own relation to God,—a relation hitherto unexampled. He did not need to asseverate over and over again, as the Fourth Gospel represents, the closeness of his intercourse with the Father ; for his disciples could divine it. They were singularly impressed by the aloofness of Jesus ;¹ but nothing filled

¹ Mark 10 32.

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them so much with awe as the glimpses they caught of the other side of his life, beholding Jesus in solitary prayer, and perceiving that his remoteness from the world was explained by his awful nearness to God. Nothing more natural than the account St. Luke gives of the occasion which prompted Jesus to teach his disciples the Lord's Prayer. The sight of Jesus in prayer prompted the request that he teach them likewise to pray. To pray with him they durst not ask, nor did he invite them. But if only they might pray like him ! The consciousness of the living God is not evoked by the precept to pray, nor quickened by any teaching about prayer ; but it is kindled from man to man as flame leaps from torch to torch.

4. The rabbis composed prayers for their disciples, and so also (as appears from this text)¹ did John the Baptist. 'How to pray' is what Jesus, as we may say in a sense, was always teaching. But the disciples intended by these words to request of him a formula of prayer, and once, in response to their request, he delivered to them this precious form.

Had we no written record of the teachings of Jesus, this prayer at least would have been preserved to us by faithful tradition from lip to lip, and it alone would suffice for the text and symbol of a new religion.

¹ Luke 11 i.

In one respect the Lord's Prayer has been more faithfully handed down by the liturgical tradition than in the 'received' text of the Gospels. The historical liturgies frequently repeat the prayer without the doxology, which was certainly no part of the original form. The doxology, being adopted by ecclesiastical usage, crept finally into the text of the Gospel. This and other additions, or even interpolations, the Church did not scruple to make, notwithstanding the veneration in which the prayer was held. It is not without surprise we note such freedom at a time when the canonical Gospels were already long established in authority. The Gospels themselves, however, furnish proof that still greater liturgical liberty was used in the earliest time. For, not only are there incidental variations between the texts of St. Matthew and St. Luke, but St. Matthew has two whole petitions which are lacking in the other form. Were these two petitions added by the early Church to bring the total number to seven and to round the liturgical form? or did other sections of the Church, forming a separate tradition, dare to eliminate two petitions which the Lord had delivered to them? Whichever way it is resolved, the question has no great practical importance. For the extra petitions of St. Matthew are as plainly in the spirit of Jesus as is the rest of the prayer. It might be said that were the Lord's Prayer not directly derived from

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Jesus, but rather the product of the earliest congregation of his disciples, it would be hardly the less a reflection of his spirit. To me, however, this prayer seems to be the most indubitably authentic memorial of Jesus. There is much evidence, unfortunately, against the fond belief that the Apostolic Church had completely assimilated the teaching of Jesus, and we cannot trust ourselves to believe that even the Apostles themselves could ever have formulated such a prayer—a prayer as remarkable for what it *does not* as for what it *does* ask, as significant for the proportion and emphasis of its petitions as for the wholeness of its expression.

The discordant traditions of this prayer in our Gospels seem as though designed by Providence to deliver us from the tyranny of the letter. It is not possible to restore again the words in which Jesus first framed this prayer in the common tongue of Palestine; and in our own tongue we are content to recite it in various ways, nothing doubting the while that all of these forms express substantially the mind of Jesus. The Church has never taken Jesus to mean that in such words precisely men must pray, but rather that such a prayer as this must be the spontaneous expression of the man who finds himself in the presence of almighty God, his turbulent desires stilled in that presence, and all his soul concentrated upon the greater needs,—

the need of God himself, first of all, and then his need of the tokens of God's fatherly care.

5. Yet even in the form of this prayer there is a marked excellence which we ought not to ignore. It must be regretted that our English versions make too little account of it.

The first characteristic of its form, and one which no version can obscure, is the fact that it is brief, reflecting Jesus' dislike of 'long prayers' and 'much speaking' in the presence of God.

But I would chiefly remark upon what may be called the liturgical form of the prayer. We are accustomed to think of liturgical language as something artificial. On the contrary, it properly denotes a style of speech which is appropriate to prayer just because it is natural. Such prayers, in particular, as are designed for common and public use must have—or they must acquire through the repetition of use—a form of polished phrase which fits them for such a purpose. Whatever is difficult for the tongue, distasteful to the ear, or embarrassing to the understanding, must be eliminated. This is the first characteristic of liturgical language: it must be fluid, sonorous, and limpid. In the second place, we must remember that the religious faculty is a region of strong feeling, and that prayer therefore naturally expresses itself in the language of feeling,—that is, in forms akin to poetry. We are hardly justified in making so broad a distinction as

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we commonly do make between prayers and hymns. There is, however, a fundamental distinction in the nature of prayer itself which often accounts for difference of form. For whereas in praise and thanksgiving the mind naturally seeks the most exalted forms of expression; for petition, on the other hand, nothing is so apt as the direct brevity of a litany. Jesus did not undertake to teach his disciples how they should praise God. To school them in this by means of a formula would be to quench the inspiration of praise. And what formula could suffice? He taught them instead what they might pray for, and in what order of emphasis. From this point of view the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples is truly a *law* to us,—not as a liturgical formula, but as a rule of desire.

But what I wish here to note is the fact that this brief prayer, which is as simple as a litany, being just an enumeration of the petitions which one may rightly make to God, is in the strictest sense liturgical, and is couched in the form of Hebrew poetry. We do not commonly reflect that there can be any poetical form which lacks both metre and rhyme. Yet we are acquainted with the poetical form of the Psalms, and it is strange that any one can read aloud the Lord's Prayer in Greek without perceiving the same principles of structure. One may detect, indeed, a peculiarity which is rarely illustrated in Hebrew poetry, namely, a concluding

assonance which, like a rhyme, binds the first three petitions in a triple verse and the next four lines in couplets.

6. I should not be at pains to dwell so long upon the form of the Lord's Prayer were it not that the form here determines the interpretation. The form of the first stanza, for example, clearly indicates the close relationship of the address of the prayer, 'Our Father,' to the three following petitions, emphasising the thought that our prayer is in behalf of a father's name, a father's kingdom, and a father's will. The form of this stanza also makes it evident that the concluding clause, 'As in heaven, so on earth,' relates to the first and second of these petitions as well as to the third.

The translation of the Lord's Prayer which I here venture to give is designed to reproduce the peculiarities of form upon which I have commented. It makes no pretence of being in other respects an improvement upon our current versions. Nor, in my opinion, is it generally desirable to supplant a form in familiar use, even if the substitute be better. For the purpose of interpretation, however, it is often advantageous to vary, for better or for worse, a phrase that has become too familiar.

Our heavenly Father :

Thy Name be hallowed,

Thy kingdom come,

Thy will be done :

As in heaven, so on earth.

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Our bread for the coming day
Give us day by day.

And forgive our debts to us,
As we have forgiven those that are indebted to us.

And bring us not into trial,
But deliver us from the Evil.

I dwell in conclusion upon the form of the first triple petition alone. It appears to me, I confess, that with great advantage to the sense it might commonly be uttered as I have written it here. This represents no idiosyncrasy of mine; for the prayer is so printed by Westcott and Hort in their Greek text of the New Testament, it has practically the same form in the Vulgate, and the Catechism of the Council of Trent enjoins the interpretation which is here indicated. I would remark that in both the Greek and Latin texts the personal pronoun ('thy') comes at the end of each line, and in that position receives a more insistent stress than we can give it in any English translation. We shall see how significant this emphasis is when we come to consider Jesus' teaching about *God's* kingdom and *God's* will.

CHAPTER II

OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

I. *The Name of God.*

7. The prayer which Jesus taught his disciples may properly enough be called 'the Lord's Prayer' inasmuch as it comes from him and bears the express stamp of his character. But, on the other hand, this common name suggests the unwarrantable assumption that such was the prayer Jesus himself was accustomed to make. The Lord's Prayer contains one petition which we dare not ascribe to Jesus as his own. In spite of his lowly human attitude before God, he did not join with his disciples in the petition 'forgive us our sins.' In fact he did not join with them at all in prayer. He taught his disciples to pray with one another, and hence to express their prayer in plural form—'Our Father,' 'our daily bread,' 'our debts,' 'deliver us.' Jesus prayed alone and cried 'My Father,' 'my God.' A better name for this prayer than that which we commonly use—if only our language permitted the use of it—is the name we are familiar

with in Latin and in several modern tongues. We speak of it as the *Pater Noster*,—why not call it ‘Our Father’? Or is there an inherent impediment in our language which forbids this? At all events, the first words of this prayer are so significant, and express so well the spirit of the whole, that there could be no better name for it.

It is a tempting fancy that such a name was current from the earliest times, both in the Greek tongue and in the language of Palestine. St. Paul writes, ‘Ye have received the Spirit of adoption whereby ye cry, *Abba*, Father.’¹ It is certainly not impossible that these words are uttered with conscious reference to the *Pater Noster*. This special reference, however, if it is indeed to be found here, is absorbed by a far broader one. For the greater implication of this passage is that Christian prayer generally is addressed to God as Father and is uttered in the spirit of such an address.² Beneath this again lies the deeper thought, that to call God ‘Father’ is not merely to obey a precept of Jesus but rather to be inspired by his example. In another Epistle St. Paul repeats these words, and by a slight change of expression makes this thought clear: ‘God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, *Abba*, Father.’³ It was not by delivering to his disciples a formula of prayer that Jesus enabled them to know God as a father and

¹ Rom. 8. 15.

² Mat. 6 6.

³ Gal. 4 6.

truly to pray to him as a father. Not even his beautiful parables of paternal love could accomplish this. It means a bold act of faith to turn to the illimitable God and say to him, Father. To this act Jesus enabled his disciples by the incitement of his example, by the contagion of his own filial confidence. Though he felt and claimed a relationship of incomparable nearness to God, yet he encouraged his disciples to share this privilege. He would be 'the firstborn among many brethren.'¹ God, he taught them, was already their Father: it was their task to *become* his sons.

Because man's access to God as Father is in so real a sense *through* Christ—not merely in the light of his instruction, but through the medium of his personal experience—the Father-Name of God is inseparably associated with the historical manifestation of Jesus. We know God as the Father of Jesus,—and *then*, through Jesus, we know him as our Father. The name Father expresses now the experience of every Christian, but it ever implies the primacy of Jesus' experience. The historical Jesus can therefore never become superfluous to the Christian faith, never be superseded, for he is the Way. When we would express all that is implied in the name Father we must use the solemn title which St. Paul employed: 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.'²

¹ Rom. 8 29.

² Rom. 15 6; 2 Cor. 1 3.

The Aramaic word 'Abba' is therefore memorable—and has in fact been so long remembered—not chiefly because it was repeated by the disciples in the daily prayer which Jesus taught them, nor even because it was used so frequently in Jesus' teaching and summed up so much of his Gospel, but rather because it was uttered by our Lord in his own prayers and summed up so much of his experience. This word is preserved in St. Mark's record of the prayer in Gethsemane,¹ and without doubt it represents the form of Jesus' constant address to God.²

8. To understand the full significance of Jesus' choice of such a name as Father we must remember that the tendency of later Jewish thought was to magnify the distance between God and the world, to conceive of the Deity as dwelling exclusively in a remote heaven, undefiled by contact with the material universe, and perhaps indifferent to its

¹ Mark 14 36.

² Matt. 11 25, 26; Luke 10 21. The word *abba* is the so-called *determinate* form of the noun. The last syllable has the force of the definite article, and (like the definite article in many languages) it serves at the same time to express relations which in English must be expressed by the possessive pronouns. Other circumstances must determine which pronoun is implied. *Abba* meant primarily *the* Father. Doubtless the Evangelists were right in translating it '*my* Father' in the prayers of Jesus, '*your* Father' in his instructions to his disciples, and '*our* Father' in the prayer he taught them. We can perceive at the same time what justification there is for the constant phrase, '*the* Father,' which we find in St. John's Gospel.

immediate fate. The conquests of Alexander and the widespread dominion of Rome gave the Jews a broader conception of the world, and the bigger world required a greater God. The old conceptions had become inept; and though the Jews still clung tenaciously to their belief in God's partiality for the Children of Israel, they could no longer conceive of him as a local God, preoccupied exclusively with the little land of Palestine. This change, indeed, was already wrought by the great Prophets, who perceived in Israel's relations with the Babylonian and Persian kingdoms the interrelation of all mankind, and proclaimed one God for all the world.

The development which began with the Prophets and was already stereotyped in the time of Jesus is significantly summarised in one fact,—the disuse of the ancient name Jehovah. In our versions of the Old Testament we have followed the example of the Jews, for we generally translate Jahwe by the general title LORD. The utterance of this name was prohibited on the ostensible ground that it was too sacred for common use. But the real motive is rather to be sought in the Jews' half-conscious sense that the old name was associated with all that was narrow, local, and anthropomorphic in the early Hebrew notion of God. They were right in this apprehension. But it is also true that the name Jehovah symbolised the confidence, directness, and sympathy of the older worship, the immediateness

of personal relationship with God, which later Judaism altogether lacked. God was half lost to the Jews by becoming the God of all the world. This was the pressing though unspoken problem of the Jewish religion. Jesus resolved it in a way which seemed little apt to accomplish such an end. For he made God's love appear the more completely universal the more intensely he appropriated it as his own, as the experience of a personal and individual relationship.

Another consequence of this emphasis upon the transcendency of the Deity in later Jewish theology was the introduction of angels to fill the gap which now yawned between God and the world. Even the Law, the most ostensible vestige of God's earlier intercourse with men, the express image of his character, and now as it were his vicar upon earth, —even the Law itself, according to a prevalent rabbinical opinion, was given only indirectly by the hand of angels.¹ This theory about God was conditioned in part by the historical situation of the Jews. The holy Nation lay prone beneath the feet of her enemies—and God did not intervene. No prophet any more spake out of the instant impulse to utter God's word. The Temple cult languished; gladness had departed from it; God was not in it. It was upheld, strange to say, only by the authority of the Law, which in turn was fostered by the

¹ Gal. 3 19.

Pharisees, who were rivals of the priests. On the other hand, the new cult of the Law, conjoined with the Pharisaical practices of almsgiving, fasting, and prayer, brought men no nearer to God, procured them no confidence, no joy.

9. One of the symptoms of this unhappy emphasis upon the transcendence of God was the scrupulous dread of uttering, except in official worship, any of the divine names. The Jews construed the Third Commandment literally, and referred to the Deity only indirectly by such terms as Heaven, the Place, the Name, the Power, the Highest, the Blessed. It is probable that our Lord himself conformed to this custom, for he could not wish to offend in this particular the susceptibilities of his people. The Gospels, indeed, do not prove it; but they must in any case have obscured such a trait, being written for the Gentile Church which had never known this scruple and could ill understand it. Yet the Gospels do give us a hint of it. They record in several instances the use of conventional substitutes for the divine name on the part either of Jesus himself or of those that addressed him.¹ The most striking instance is Jesus' custom of speaking of 'the kingdom of *Heaven*.' There can be no doubt that St. Matthew correctly records the phrase of Jesus; but the other Evangelists are

¹ Luke 6 35; Mark 14 61, 62. See Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu*, p. 161.

equally right in understanding it to *mean* 'the kingdom of God,' and in so translating it for their Gentile readers. We may conclude that Jesus found himself obliged to employ some substitute for the divine name. So far as this was due to external compulsion, it must be attributed to the scruple suggested by the unhappy doctrine of the remote transcendence of God, and perhaps to a magical superstition about the effect of uttering the name of a deity. It was not, however, by external compulsion that Jesus was led to appropriate, among all the terms which were currently used to designate the Deity, the one name which most aptly served to bring God out of his remoteness and into vital, sympathetic touch with men. The name Father is the purest symbol of God, suggesting all that is precious in the anthropomorphic view, and naught that is crude. The choice of this name was prompted by Jesus' most intimate experience. He associated with it all that was most fundamental in his Gospel, and preferred to use it even where custom permitted the explicit mention of God,—that is, in prayer.

In the Old Testament, God is sometimes spoken of as the Father of his People. He was addressed in prayer as 'Our Father.' Jesus said emphatically, 'My Father.'

10. Men have disputed the originality of Jesus in adopting this name for God. To this intent it

may be urged that in the time of Jesus it was more common to address God as Father than it had been in the period covered by the Old Testament. And further, that a tendency appeared in later Judaism to distinguish the individual from the mass of the nation, and showed itself occasionally in the use of the phrases 'my Father' and 'thy Father.' It is certain that Jesus did not adopt a name which was altogether new. Yet no one will affirm that his teaching about the fatherhood of God was merely a reflection of contemporary thought. What is significant is this, that a notion which appears dubiously upon the periphery of Jewish thought becomes the centre in the experience and teaching of Jesus. The sayings of Jesus make upon us so striking an impression of originality, not because we are reasonably convinced that no one ever before gave utterance to such thoughts, but because they are so evidently the genuine expression of his own experience. This is the only sense in which it is worth while speaking of originality. Nothing is more original than the water which gushes from a pure spring. We quench our thirst without raising the scruple that other water is very much like this water. It was Jesus' constant aim to single out simple, central, and vital truths. He magnified them by placing them in solitary prominence. How many other wise and true things he might have said and happily did not! Why should we expect

to find in the teaching of Jesus rare and recondite thoughts such as the wit of man had never chanced to light upon? His supreme greatness lay in seeing the obvious and prizing the essential. Strange it would have been if no one of his great thoughts, so vital to mankind, had emerged in any other mind. This I remark expressly with reference to his choice of the name Father; but it needs to be considered in view of all his teaching,—in view especially of the Lord's Prayer, which is all of it so obvious and yet as a whole so incomparable.

The simple thoughts with which Jesus dealt gained force and coherency in the unity of his unique experience; and as a whole—in its emphasis and proportion—his teaching is in reality so new that it is vain to palter about incidental resemblances to earlier teachers. Jewish scholars have made laborious search in the mass of early rabbinical literature, and there, under the vain ingenuities which darken truth, amongst a host of petty precepts irrelevant to life, they claim to find apt parallels to the greater sayings of Jesus. But if it had to be granted that the rabbis said before all that Jesus ever taught, we might still reply that, unfortunately, they said so much more. We must make the same reply to the Christian rabbis. Men to-day are crying, Back to Jesus,—away from the voluminous intricacy of scholasticism, and back to the simple wholeness and proportion of Jesus'

teaching! But, exclaim the Christian rabbis, have we not *included* in our volumes of theology and ethics all that Jesus ever said? Yes, we must answer; but, unfortunately, you have said so much more.

II. *Jesus' Experience.*

11. Nothing was more original to Jesus, because nothing was more genuinely the reflection of his experience, than the custom of calling God, Father; nor has any idea been more fruitful in the world. Our faith in God as Father is not so much illuminated by the teaching of Jesus as kindled by his experience.

Jesus appropriated God as *his* God,¹ *his* Father, with an emphasis which was utterly personal, individual,—one might almost say, exclusive. And just because he made God so thoroughly his own, so closely appropriated him as *his* Father, he was able at last to condivide with his disciples the vital consciousness of this high fellowship. To speak of God as a father was not new. Most races of men have done that. But in its depth and constancy the *experience* of Jesus was altogether new, and it is the contagion of his experience that has made the fatherhood of God something more real to us than a mere parable. That God is the Father of *all* men is not an experience, but at best

¹ See my *Gaudium Crucis*, pp. 52-55.

a deduction or an inference. It was Jesus' experience that God was *his* God, *his* Father.

With respect to the fatherhood of God Jesus never put himself upon a plane with his disciples: he said *my* Father, but he taught them to say *our* Father. Jesus made for himself an exclusive claim; yet he did not thereby debar others from approach to God, rather he became thereby the Way. By his intense personal appropriation of God Jesus effected this, that the disciples who knew this filial relation first in the example of Jesus could never be content to attach to the name Father the vague notion of a general benevolence. Jesus laid the utmost stress upon the intimate, individual relation of the soul to God. First of all this was his own experience. Consequently he inferred that it must express God's universal relation to men, attainable in the experience of all. He thereby immensely exalted the individual. *He* first recognised the inestimable value of every human soul.¹

By his emphasis upon the individual and the individual's relation to God, Jesus tacitly affirmed the universality of the divine fatherhood, and rejected in principle the claim of his nation to an exclusive privilege. Privilege can readily be imagined as attaching to men in the mass, to a nation, or a sect. Man regarded as a member of a nation, family, or sect, is typical. But the indi-

¹ Matt. 16 26; 18 6-14. See my *Gaudium Crucis*, pp. 27, 28.

vidual is not typical; and, if God deals with men as individuals, he deals with all alike.

So Jesus founded a universal religion. Is there any other religious symbol so fit to be universal as the Lord's Prayer? Who is there that will not pray 'Our Father,' if he can pray at all? And why should any man who utters this prayer refuse to confess himself a disciple of Jesus?

12. How did Jesus learn to know God as his Father? Was it in some marked crisis of religious experience, as, for example, on the occasion of his baptism, when God's voice claimed him as his 'beloved Son'? This, it appears, was the experience in which Jesus attained the definite conviction that he was the Christ, the Son of God in the absolute sense, in the sense of exclusive privilege. But this new consciousness itself reposed upon a broad underlying faith in God as Father—his Father, but also the Father of every man. All that we know of Jesus compels us to conclude that, like a child which has been brought up in the paternal house, he could not recall a time when he had not known his Father.

Jesus generalised from his own experience: he said 'my Father *and* your Father.' The name itself was precious to him, and he associated it with the thought of God's immediate and beneficent presence in the world,¹ with his universal providence over

¹ Matt. 6 26, 30, 32.

all his creatures,¹ as well as with his special care for the individual. It expressed, in fine, the perfect goodness of God.²

13. Yet Jesus' belief in the goodness of God was not the expression of an easy-going optimism. It was not the mere matter of course which it appears to be in the popular theology of to-day, or according to the older rationalism, the complacency of which Heine from his 'mattress grave' rebuked with irony, being asked if he did fear to face God, and replying, 'Oh! He will forgive me; that's what he's for—*c'est son metièr*.' If the cloud of mortal destiny did not wring from Jesus a cry like that of St. Paul's, 'the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain,' this is not a sign that he was indifferent to the problems which stagger our faith, it is proof only of the completeness of his victory. He is so serene in the amazing elevation of his faith that we hardly perceive that faith means a conquest and denotes a struggle. Consequently we are not so much astonished as we ought to be at some of his sayings which show from what an elevation he regarded the world. This calm saying, for example, is truly amazing, that God 'maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust';³ or that 'he is kind to the unthankful and evil.'⁴ Here we note Jesus' steady observation of

¹ Matt. 5 45. ² Matt. 5 48. ³ Matt. 5 45. ⁴ Luke 6 35.

a fact which had always appeared to the Hebrews an imputation upon God's justice.¹ Jesus saw in it only a proof of the perfect goodness of the heavenly Father. Perhaps it is still more amazing that he turns upon his hearers with the demand that all who would be God's sons must attain a like perfection.

But if Jesus had ignored all that was of sinister import in the world about him, his own dark history was enough to make God seem terrible. And in fact,—little as we are accustomed to dwell upon this aspect of his character,—Jesus himself feared God. God was to him first of all the Most High, the Almighty. He conceived of him in the overpowering majesty of his being and bowed with genuine humility to his will. When Jesus speaks of God as 'the Father in heaven' we are not to suppose that the phrase 'in heaven' (or 'which art in heaven') puts off far from us him whom the name of Father makes so close. It is not properly a local designation, and does not at all signify God's remoteness in space. We might more aptly translate it 'heavenly' or 'divine.' What it does most emphatically denote is the supreme exaltation of God in the scale of being; it suggests the awful majesty of God, and reflects in fact Jesus' awe of him.

¹ In proof, one might cite innumerable passages from the Psalms. Observe Jesus' reference to the problem in Matt. 20 15: 'Is thine eye evil, because I am good?'

Jesus once said to his disciples, 'Be not afraid of them which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him who after he hath killed the body hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.'¹ This austere warning was an echo out of Jesus' own inner experience. To Jesus also the almighty God was terrible, he was mysterious in his doings, and his ways past finding out. Jesus encountered in the path of duty disillusion upon disillusion, woe upon woe. Nothing was spared him, and every blow was the harder because it seemed to defeat not him only but his mission. The popularity of the early hopeful days in Galilee was soon succeeded by indifference. From the first, Jesus had to bear the contempt and hatred of all who were accounted leaders in Israel; he encountered the fickle favour of the masses; and endured the incompetence of his chosen disciples. He saw the futility of the hope of prompt success which inspired him at his baptism, and became at last convinced that his dark fate led him through treachery, through scorn and odium, to a death of agony. He recognised this as God's work and God's will. And yet—such is the greatness of Jesus—with unshaken confidence, with undiminished love, he dared to turn to this almighty, unsearchable God and say to him, My Father. In the moments

¹ Luke 12 4, 5.

of darkest discouragement and bitterest conflict he fled to him. When the crushing hostility of all the influential classes precluded the hope of a prompt national conversion, he cried, 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes. Yea, Father, for so it was well pleasing in thy sight.'¹ And in Gethsemane he prayed, '*Abba*, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.'² One can well see that to call God 'Father' was no proof of an easy optimism: it was a daring act of faith; it was Jesus' greatest deed.³

III. *God is Good.*

14. The parable was Jesus' common form of teaching, and it was employed, as a matter of course, to illustrate the goodness of God. The name Father itself may be regarded as a condensed parable. But it was not from the human analogy that Jesus learned the goodness of God. Human fatherhood is not a measure of the divine but only its faint reflection.⁴ Jesus encouraged his disciples to pray by citing the commonest instances of a

¹ Matt. 11 25, 26.

² Mark 14 36.

³ See Bousset, *Jesus*, pp. 54-56. For Jesus' confident faith in God as *his* God in view of death and through death, see my *Gaudium Crucis*, especially pp. 54, 55, 114.

⁴ Ephes. 3 15.

human father's care for his children; but at the same time he expressly recognised that the analogy was inadequate. 'What man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or, if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him!' ¹ In the parable of the Prodigal Son ²—it were better named the Forgiving Father—Jesus appeals to the highest instance of a father's love, the clearest reflection of the divine in man; and yet we may fancy him subjoining even here that 'how much more!'

15. Jesus employed the name Father, and appealed to the analogies which that name suggests; but he did not thereby picture God in man's image. His affirmations about the goodness of God go far beyond all analogies of human goodness. Jesus required rather that men fashion themselves after the image of God. He did not force himself to believe in the goodness of God in spite of the world: he saw it directly manifested in the world; in God's care for all his creatures,—for ravens and sparrows and all the fowls of the air, for lilies and all the grass of the field,—in the sun that rises on the evil and the good, in the rain that falls on the just and the unjust. Jesus could not think the Father's

¹ Matt. 7 9-11.

² Luke 15 11-32.

goodness as impersonal, and yet he perceived it to be universal—and in this he saw its perfection.

The Jews, who knew God principally in the exactions of the Law, conceived of him as a hard taskmaster. Jesus occasionally touches upon this error with irony,—as, for example, in the parable where the slothful servant calls his master ‘a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering where thou didst not scatter.’¹ But on occasions his indignation could blaze more hotly. The most notable instance is his brusque reply to the rich young man who came running and kneeling to him and saying ‘*Good* teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’ It is commonly but perversely supposed that the word ‘good’ here means sinless. Though no one really supposes that a youth who here encountered Jesus for the first time intended to address him as ‘sinless one.’ And whom did Jesus need to instruct that God is sinless? The word actually means here what it commonly meant in an earlier period of our language and is still quite capable of meaning. The young man was impulsively attracted to Jesus because he appeared to be such a *kind* teacher, one who had shown himself so good to the people, who did not endlessly multiply his precepts—like the Scribes and, according to their view, like God—but was content to lay upon his disciples no greater burden

¹ Matt. 25 24, 26.

than the necessary commandments and the weight of the great alternative. Above all, had he not just then shown himself so *good* to the children, and made the attainment of the kingdom seem so easy that one might '*receive* it like a little child'? When Jesus perceived that this man was fleeing to him from the severity of God, and that God whose goodness is beyond comparison was being disparaged by comparison with him, then his jealousy for the Father's name blazed in his reply: 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good save one—God.' Jesus would not be accounted a refuge from God, and he sternly pointed this man back to the way of God's commandments.¹ He was indeed a 'good' teacher, yet he taught (to use Lowell's phrase) that 'the Ten Commandments will not budge.' The mind of Jesus is well expressed in one of Rückert's *Unstrung Pearls*:—

'Vor Gott ist keiner Flucht, als nur zu Ihm. Kein Trutz
Vor Vaters Strenge ist, nur Liebe Kindes Schutz.'²

16. Such is the significance of the word which introduces the Lord's Prayer. I have dwelt very long upon it; but how can one say too much? Do we not need all of this teaching of Jesus to enable us rightly to approach God in prayer? Are no

¹ Mark 10 17-19.

² 'From God no flight, but only to Him. No defiance
Of a father's sternness. Love is the child's sole defence.'

Christians tempted nowadays—like the disciples of the Scribes—to flee to Jesus away from God? Think with what wrath Jesus must receive such a cult! Jesus is the Way to God, therefore we pray as he has taught us. He is the Way to God, therefore we pray ‘in his name.’ He is the Way to God, therefore we pray also to him. From the beginning it has been characteristic of Christians that they ‘call upon the name of the Lord’ Jesus. The Fourth Gospel represents that Jesus expressly instructed his disciples to pray in his name and to him;¹ but it is added, as though to rebuke a misconception, ‘I say not that I shall pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you.’² That expresses the mind of Jesus. It rebukes all who flee away from God to angelic or saintly intercessors, or to Jesus himself. It rebukes emphatically the notion that the Son by his loving-kindness saves us from the wrath of a too stern Father, entrenched though this notion is in popular thought and supported by a whole system of theology which still presses upon us like an incubus with the secular weight of its authority. What Jesus most surely taught us and what he had most at heart to teach was this: that for all our needs, great and small, in view of the arduous tasks of life, in temptation, and in sin, we may turn directly to our heavenly Father.

¹ John 14 14, R.V.

² John 16 26, 27.

CHAPTER III

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

I. *As a Precept.*

17. The first petition of the Lord's Prayer suggests comparison with the Third Commandment. The comparison is instructive because it reveals the essential difference between the Old Dispensation and the New. It is a striking fact that the central symbol of the Old Testament is a law, that of the New Testament a prayer. The Law came as a requisition, the Gospel as a gift. This broad contrast was obscured when early Catholicism made a creed the central symbol of Christendom. The Creed may be as exacting as the Law. Faith is essential to Christianity, but not the form of it. In prayer, true faith is expressed more simply and wholly than in any creed.

It is the first petition of the Lord's Prayer especially which suggests this comparison, and it reveals more sharply the contrast with the Law, because its *subject matter* is the same as that of the Third Commandment. Both have to do with God's

Name: in the one case we have the requisition that it shall not be profaned; in the other, the ideal that it must be hallowed. That, in general, is the difference between the Law and the Gospel: the one is negative, the other is positive. The difference lies not in the fact that the one is to be *done* and the other merely to be *desired*. An ideal prompts indeed to higher performance than does mere law. Prayer is an expression of the Christian ideal and desire, but it does not imply a supine attitude. The antinomy inherent in the relation of moral effort to divine grace is insoluble to the understanding, but it is harmonised in the experience of every Christian. St. Paul expresses this antinomy, without feeling any need of resolving it, when he exhorts, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.'¹

We may profitably regard the whole of the Lord's Prayer as expressing something to be done, not merely something to be asked for and received. We bring it thus into closer comparison with the Law without obscuring its distinctive difference. Do we not, on the other hand, when we recite the Ten Commandments in the Church, turn them into a litany without abating in any degree their obligation? God's kingdom in its perfection is incom-

¹ Phil. 2 12, 13.

patible with the conditions of this present world : we expect it therefore as God's gift, and by no effort of ours can we bring it about. But when we pray for this great gift, with all the blessings which it comprises, does not our prayer imply the resolve that in the life which we now live in the flesh we shall do what in us lies to hallow God's name ; that we shall tread more resolutely the path of duty, knowing that its hardest vicissitudes may be the expression of our Father's will ; and that with our thoughts fixed upon the heavenly kingdom which we expect to inherit, we shall here observe the laws of that kingdom above all others ? By the prayer for daily bread no good man will feel himself dispensed from the moral obligation to work, if he is in any wise able to do it ; but he will labour the more courageously because he expects God's blessing upon the work of his hands. We are never so poor as when we flee to God for pardon, but we bring at least the sacrifice of a broken spirit and a contrite heart. We shall bear ourselves more stoutly in the conflict with temptation and evil because we meet it in a spirit of prayer which enables us to say with St. Paul, ' I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me.'¹ Whatever difficulty, in fine, the understanding may experience in dealing with the contrast between faith and works, or between law and grace, the Christian attitude is

¹ Phil. 4 13.

no whit the less moral for being so thoroughly religious.

18. Inasmuch as the positive ideal of hallowing God's name *includes* the negative precept that it shall not be profaned, we may reasonably consider here the import of the Third Commandment.

I have already said that the Jews of Jesus' time interpreted the Third Commandment in so rigorous a sense that they scrupled to utter the name of God except in prayer or in the reading of the Scriptures. They avoided the use of God's name even in formal and solemn oaths, swearing instead (as Jesus taunted them with doing) by 'the gold of the Temple,' by 'the gift upon the altar,' or by 'the throne' (of God).¹ Such, however, was not the original intention of the Law, for by the Law the Hebrews were required to swear in the name of Jehovah. To take God's name in vain (or 'in falsehood,' as the margin of the Revised Version translates)² meant specifically to swear falsely in his name,—that is, to utter God's name as the sanction of a false oath. In that direction lay the most serious temptation to profane the name of God. The aim of the legislator was to maintain inviolate the sanctity of the oath, and so to preserve an important social institution, like the humanitarian institution of the Sabbath which is secured by the Fourth Commandment.

¹ Matt. 23 16-22.

² Exod. 20 7.

Deliberate and high-handed blasphemy, the bold renunciation of God, was hardly contemplated by the lawgiver; but it is, of course, utterly contrary to the spirit and letter of the Third Commandment. The same may be said of what we call vulgar or profane swearing, and of all careless use of the divine names,—vices to which the Jews were apparently not so much addicted as we. It is doubtless true that the careless use of God's name may not always indicate serious perversity of heart. The foulest oaths on the lips of coarse men who are inured to a thoughtless habit may be, as Ruskin says, 'sinless as the hawk's cry,' compared to the hypocritical prayers of a wicked man. Yet if they were sinless, they would not for that be the less harmful. Names are counters: they have in themselves no intrinsic value, but only the arbitrary worth we give them by association. Such counters, however, are essential to us; by them we do our thinking, and through the power of association we may clothe them with a high and real worth. On the other hand, we can also strip them of all their worth, or by attaching to them base associations can make them positively unworthy. This is what we do by the careless use of God's name. Putting all question of guilt aside, and considering only the evil consequence of this habit, it must be evident that we debase our spiritual coin, deface the royal image and superscription, and perhaps engrave in its

place rude emblems of shame. We are not likely to reflect how many high and sacred associations the mere name of God carries to us, until we note the perplexity our missionaries are put to in the endeavour to find in pagan tongues (in the languages of China, for example) word-metal which is pure enough for the coining of a name for God, or to select among the current names for deity one which will aptly bear the rich significance which the name of God has in Christian experience. The pagan names of deity are commonly debased by diabolical associations, and the whole aim of Christian missions, expressed in one word, is to proclaim God's name,—that is, as one might say, to place in the possession of every man a coin which bears clearly the divine image with this superscription: 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.'¹

When we reflect what mighty hopes and lofty ideals may be made, as it were, current coin by association with the name of God or the name of Jesus; when we think what consolation the Name may carry to us in sorrow, what strength in conflict, what prompt comfort in extremity; it must appear after all not so strange that the Jews should regard the name as a potent symbol of the person. It was the conception, not of the Jews alone, but of most early races, that to utter the name was to invoke the person and irresistibly to bring him near. This

¹ 1 John 1 5.

naïve notion is profoundly true: we call reverently upon God's name, and he who is never far away is at once near us with power. Think then how momentous is the fact that merely by careless profanity, without deliberate sin, we may lose the power of invoking God in our need.

A witty divine has said that those who are addicted to the senseless habit of vulgar swearing 'are taken with the Devil's bare hook.' Other sins have an obvious motive in some immediate pleasure: this alone has no reward, yet its evil consequence is so grave. Careless profanity, however, on the part of those who make no profession of religion, is 'sinless as the hawk's cry'—so I too must think—in comparison with the guiltier profanity with which they only can be charged who solemnly profess to 'take' (or 'bear,' as one might also translate) God's name—and so walk as to shame it. They alone 'take God's name in vain,' for in the deeper sense they alone 'take' it. To such alone applies the solemn warning of the Commandment, that 'God will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.' Their offence is not profanity, but profanation. The consequences of this sin are most serious both to the individual and to society; for it debases not one man's counter, but the current coin.

19. When we dwell exclusively upon the negative precept, and reflect how many times God's name is

profaned in the common use of it, to disuse it altogether, following the custom of the Jews, might appear the safer way. Substantially this is what many Christians do who refuse to make a public profession of their faith in Christ because others bear this name unworthily, and they would not run the risk. But our Lord himself rebukes this over cautious attitude in his parable of the Talents.¹ If God is a 'hard' master, it might seem the safer policy to hide one's talent in the earth and so to avoid all risk of loss in the use of it. So thought the Jews. There is some truth in your false point of view, says Jesus; God is in a sense an exacting master, for he exacts fruit by all means and at all risks; on your own assumption, therefore, he says in the same vein of irony, you ought to have resorted to the base trade of the money-changer and the illegal practice of usury, rather than appear before God without fruit.²

In saying this, Christ bids us turn away from the negative precepts of the Law to the positive precepts of the Gospel. Even while we regard the first petition of the Lord's Prayer under the aspect of a commandment, we observe that it leaves no place for timorous scruple, since it enjoins positively that God's name be hallowed by all holy and reverent

¹ Matt. 25 14-30.

² Jesus' opinion of money-changers he once made abundantly evident.—Matt. 21 12, 13.

use. To avoid all use of God's name is to hide our coin in the earth. Concluding our play upon this same figure of speech, we may say that the name of God is a rich coin given us by tradition, which we in turn must enhance in value by the usury of our religious experience. It is a coin which we must not hoard for ourselves; for though it may be valuable as an amulet, its full and proper use is found in currency. Wherever this coin passes current, with its image and superscription undimmed, so far extends God's realm.

II. *The Gospel of the Father.*

20. This recognition of the potency of God's name in common use and currency brings the first petition of the Lord's Prayer into close relation with the second; the ideal of hallowing God's name, with our aspiration after the coming kingdom which is to express his rule. We shall offer both these petitions with more hearty devotion if we reflect—as the form of our prayer bids us do—that what is in question is a *father's* name and a *father's* rule. First of all and above all it is the Father-Name of God which we as Christians are to hallow in private thought and in public use. Where that name is carried, there goes the Gospel. The parable of the Loving Father (which we name ineptly the Prodigal Son) is a little Gospel in itself,—and is it not all implicit in the Father-Name? We may picture

that the coin we have been talking about has inscribed upon the reverse side of it a summary of this parable, and that around the edge is engraved the injunction, 'Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.' To make all men rich by distributing this precious coin is the object of Christian missions.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, 'Hallowed be thy name,' and this must often have been his own petition. Doubtless the Fourth Gospel correctly reflects the mind of Jesus when it records the prayer, 'Father, glorify thy name,'¹ and rightly expresses the whole aim of his life in the confession, 'I made known unto them thy name, and will make it known.'² What else is our mission as disciples of Jesus but to make God's name, the Father's name, more widely and more perfectly known? This is the mission of every Christian, and the so-called foreign missionary has only a farther and a wider field.

21. In view of this wider prospect, in view of the world-wide proclamation of God's name and extension of his kingdom, we can understand why the positive ideal of hallowing God's name is expressed in the form of a prayer rather than as a commandment. It is an aim which surpasses the utmost scope of our endeavour, therefore we pray for it. Not that we dare be slothful in this business, as though we had no part to play beyond offering our

¹ John 12 28.

² John 17 26.

prayer. But in this great field no man can labour in hope without prayer, or without the consequent assurance that God is working through our slender means—and far beyond them.

Very far beyond our effort or our aim God is now manifestly working. To see his work you have but to look. In the spread of Christianity in early times there was nothing more wonderful than you may behold to-day. It may seem a ridiculous opinion, but I am not abashed to confess it as mine, that the most momentous event of modern times, altogether the most significant cosmical fact now within the sphere of human observation, is what we call foreign missions. The missionary effort of the Church and the formal agencies directed with deliberate purpose towards the conversion of the world to Christianity are indeed more considerable than the man in the street commonly supposes ; but they are after all so shamefully disproportionate to the total power of Christendom and so inadequate to the great aim in view, that standing alone they might be considered a negligible factor in history. But they do not stand alone. It requires no singular prophetic foresight to perceive that they mark the direction in which history is moving, and point to the end towards which unconsciously the greatest efforts of the human race are now converging. That is to say, God is working not only through but far beyond the conscious efforts of a few

Christian men to realise the prayer that his name may be hallowed on earth as in heaven. In reckoning the forces which are at work to accomplish this end we must consider not merely the official missionary agencies and the deliberate effort of the Church, but the total impact of Christendom upon the rest of the world.

The past century and the age in which we now live appears to many a crassly materialistic period. It seems to be chiefly distinguished as the age of great mechanical inventions, which surpass everything hitherto attained and still give promise of greater things. Unquestionably, men's energies are now chiefly absorbed in material development. But it must be remembered that mankind has at all times, and as a matter of course, been chiefly employed in material labour, though never before with such success, and often without any development or progress whatsoever. Machinery is the wonder of our age. We are especially impressed by the development of the means of transportation over sea and land,—now it is also under the sea and through the air; by the devices for communicating thought,—first by wire, and now without it. Certainly these things are marvellous, but we must recollect that they are truly great only in so far as they are relevant to some humane end and conduce to the betterment of humanity. We are so much absorbed in wonder at the means, that we do not

consider enough what ends they may subserve. The means of communicating at a distance are important only when there is some thought worthy to communicate. The invention of printing is important, not because it furnishes now employment to a multitude of men who run the presses, but because it has made it possible for one man's thought to become the thought of many, because it has helped to unify the world on a higher level of thought. Our means of rapid transportation must have some purpose beyond the gratification of an idle desire to travel. *Coelum non animam mutant.* What shall this greater purpose be but the unification of the world?

No one can see the future by looking at it point blank; it can only be seen out of a corner of the eye,—from a position, that is, which gives us also some view backward upon history. Nearly three hundred years ago Bacon published *The Great Instauration* of learning. Upon the title-page he depicted a galley passing between the Pillars of Hercules; and underneath, as the motto of the age, he wrote this text: 'Men shall run to and fro upon the earth, and knowledge shall be increased.' It was already evident to men of his time that daring voyages of discovery, besides opening up a wider commerce, were subservient to a greater end, namely, to the Revival of Learning. One of the consequences of the Revival of Learning is Protestant

Christianity. So we ought to judge of the far-reaching activities of our day. Our marvellous means of communication and transportation are rapidly making one all nations of men that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. All will be enriched in thought by mutual intercourse, though we doubtless have more to impart to the East than we can expect to receive in return. Chief among the gifts we have to impart is the Gospel of God the Father. I conceive therefore that our great railways and steamship lines are most directly fulfilling their purpose when they make the journey smooth and swift for the feet which are shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.

But we must not forget that the whole of Christendom is working mightily upon the whole world. Only the least part of the prodigious effort of mankind is consciously directed to the humane end of uniting the world in a common faith and purpose. But 'there is a divinity which shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will.' Great steamship combinations, transcontinental railways, the vast extension of commerce,—God uses them all as his means. Strong and unscrupulous men, moved by various lusts, vie with one another for selfish ends and unconsciously subserve God's aim of making the world one. When the world is one, it will know but one God; and who can doubt what his name will be? One of our greatest writers, intoxi-

cated by the sense of power in human inventions, labours to interpret the steamship and the locomotive as poetical facts. I can see them already as religious facts. Glad of that insight, I desire to have a direct and conscious part in fulfilling God's purpose, —while others subserve it indirectly or oppose it in vain. When the future historian looks back upon the century which has accomplished more nearly than any other the unification of the world, he will value the end more highly than the means, and he will not pronounce upon our day the judgment that machinery and material development was its greatest distinction.

The fact that the collective forces of Christendom are operating upon the non-Christian world, suggests other reflections of a less cheerful complexion. The character of our intercourse with pagan peoples, the rapacity of our commerce, the cynical cruelty of our governments, our stupid contempt for all ways that are not ours, seem hardly apt to recommend to them our God or to hallow his name. Still, a hostile or bellicose relation is after all a *relation*; and something better than bullets may be exchanged in warfare,—the Crusades being an example in point. The spiritual coin we carry to far-off lands in commerce and warfare is often too much battered and defaced to pass current in Christendom, yet it may be precious in a country where the poverty is great. In the study we may

admire at our ease the great historic religions as they were conceived by their founders; but the observer at close range sees rather the prevailing and popular side of religion, especially the fear of demons which afflicts all pagan peoples alike. One who is impressed with the devil-ridden imagination of paganism expresses the aim of Christian missions in one word, 'to teach men not to be afraid of the dark.' The true name of God can do that,—the Father-Name. From such servile fear even the debased coin of Christendom can redeem men, though it be circulated, so to say, in different and perplexing denominations. Enough if one may still find traces of the royal image and decipher the superscription which summarises the Gospel in the one message, 'that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.'

The debased currency of Christendom is bound to go where our commerce goes. Our rare mission stations are therefore the more necessary. They may be regarded as official banks, established to redeem outworn coin and to issue freshly minted pieces in exchange. It may be remarked as a hopeful sign that both missionaries and their converts are just now very much in earnest about simplifying the coinage and reducing the number of denominations,—all of which will in the end redound to our advantage.

If the Christian name of God had not penetrated

to far lands, one might with more reason dispute the necessity of Christian missions. But to the farthest it has gone; far lands have in many ways been brought near; and Christianity being everywhere known, it is our duty to see that it is rightly known. We must labour to circulate the pure coin and to withdraw the debased currency. But, on the whole, this great labour for the unification of the world is operating by forces beyond our control, adapted to intricate plans which no calculation of ours could direct. It is the work of a greater mind than ours,—a mind which includes our mind and that of our pagan brother as well. Therefore beyond our puny work reaches out our prayer that the name of our heavenly Father may be hallowed in all the earth as it is in heaven. This is a great task we here contemplate; but its consummation is necessary for us and for all,—for God most of all, we must suppose. This religious aim will never be accomplished by religious means alone. But God has all means at his disposal—religious, secular, material—and he is employing them all.

It is good for a man to contemplate imaginatively the whole world and God's world-plan. We can know but the outskirts of his ways, and our practical co-operation can extend not very far; but it is an uplifting experience to contemplate the world as a whole. No experience is truly uplifting which does not give us wider sympathies and broader horizons.

This is one of the tremendous things about the Bible: it is all expressed in terms of the whole world, because it is all conceived in terms of God. 'Whole' is a word which has reference to time as well as to space. The Biblical view of the world is spacious: it also contemplates vast tracts of time, and often gazes upon eternity. Hence it is that many a simple Christian, knowing no great literature beyond the Bible, is more broadly cultured than many scholars,—especially if to his Biblical interest the Christian adds an enlightened enthusiasm for foreign missions. The long period of history which the Bible covers belongs to us as well as to the Jews; the nineteen hundred years of Christianity are not more really ours; and no people upon the earth can contemplate a longer history than we may claim as Christians. Our religion compels us to regard this history as a fact of cosmical importance. The simplest Christian who habitually views his life as an episode of this long history, thus greatly conceived, cannot fail to attain a certain elevation of mind, a sublime aloofness which not every philosopher can boast.

Unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how mean a thing is man.

Most Christians would admit the charge that they are too worldly, but the trouble with them really is that they are not worldly enough. Worldliness, in

the evil sense of the word, denotes a too exclusive attachment to a very small part of the world, severed from all relation to the whole. It is a species of snobbishness, understanding that word as Thackeray defined it: a mean admiration for mean things. This is what St. John has in mind when he exhorts us, 'Love not the world.'¹ The way to escape his rebuke is by loving more of the world. Worldliness, if it embraces in the scope of its love a whole city, becomes civic righteousness; if it embraces a nation, it is patriotism. Love of the world, if only it is broad enough, becomes nobly moral. A worldliness which embraces the whole world in its interest is akin to religion. It is this greater worldliness St. John has in mind when he says, 'God so loved the world.'² From our pettier and nearer interests it is a far flight to the thought of God, but when we think of the whole world we are already in the presence of God. Our interests in a small part of this planet are properly called worldly, they might even be called earthly; but interest in the earth as a whole is a heavenly interest. For this earth, viewed as a whole and from afar, what is it but a star?

III. *Why do we Pray?*

22. When from contemplation we turn to practice and to prayer, it may be asked why our effort

¹ 1 John 2 15.

² John 3 16.

and our prayer need be directed to so broad a plan or to so far an aim. If the unification of the world in a common faith and purpose is God's work, a work which he himself must have much at heart, and will surely accomplish in due time, why need we pray for it? This, however, is an objection which, if it applies to one prayer, applies to all. Our Lord himself has put the dilemma in the sharpest form. For while on the one hand he urges strongly the necessity of importunity in prayer,¹ he affirms on the other hand, 'Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him.'² This saying in St. Matthew's Gospel is inscribed above the Lord's Prayer, and we cannot therefore avoid inquiring its import. The saying was meant, doubtless, to encourage confidence in prayer (in contrast to the doubting faith of the Gentile cults); but it seems to relieve prayer of all urgency, if not to empty it of all meaning. This is in fact an antinomy which the understanding is impotent to solve; yet it is practically resolved in Christian experience, and it is not impossible to express that experience in words.

True prayer is justified in religious experience. But I have nothing to say in defence of such prayer as is merely the expression of a vigorous will which a man would impose upon God. Such importunity is impiety. Nor will I seek to justify clamorous

¹ Luke 11 5-10; 18 1-8.

² Matt. 6 8, 32.

petition to a far-off and perhaps unmindful God. There is no true prayer but in the consciousness that the infinite God is present. In that experience many new things become known to us, and some of the perplexities of the understanding vanish. At other times we may curiously inquire the reasons for prayer; but in that Presence our whole consciousness is expressed in a cry. It is the consciousness of God's fullness and of our emptiness. No man can find himself in the presence of God and not desire to speak to him. What can our speech be but a petition, knowing how rich is God and ourselves how needy? This experience also prescribes the character of our petition. At other times we may idly deliberate what vain things we should choose first, if some power were ready to gratify our whim. The fairy tale of the Three Wishes expresses the proverbial fatuity of our chance desires. Prayer, it is true, must ever be an expression of our sincere desire, but surely not the expression of all our desires. The very thought of God must curb desire. Commonly we marshal our more respectable desires, express them in the form of a prayer, and then go our way thinking we have done God a 'service,'—but expecting nothing less in the world than to receive what we have asked. Many have no other notion or experience of prayer. Regarding it as a pious practice, well pleasing to God, they are inclined to think that fruitless peti-

tion is a less worthy form of prayer than thanksgiving or praise. We can hardly enter upon prayer but through meditation, because it is by meditation we renew our experience of God. But unfortunately we commonly remain in the preliminary stage. Our prayers for the most part are nothing but meditations, chastened more or less by the consciousness that before God all hearts are open, all desires known, and from him no secrets are hid. But if in the midst of our meditation, we were to be surprised by God himself, by his veritable presence, would not our stilted praise wither upon our lips, our irrelevant petitions burn the tongue? Jesus has taught us how a man dare pray in the presence of God, where the first cry of the heart is for God himself—his name, his kingdom, his will, or whatsoever expression we may frame for what we hope to enjoy in God. This craving will be insistent, importunate, and so much the more because we know it is sure to be satisfied by our heavenly Father.

The first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer are not (as we commonly suppose) a mere preliminary to prayer, a decent sort of recognition of the divine supremacy. They are really prayers and petitions, the expression of our first and all embracing desire. In the presence of God we find it natural, inevitable, to do what Jesus elsewhere enjoins¹: we seek first of all the kingdom of God

¹ Matt. 6 33.

and his righteousness, confident that all things *necessary* for our temporal life will be 'added.' But in true and earnest prayer there is commonly a focus or burning point conditioned by our present experience in the world. We crave for God, for communion with him, possession of him,—and that substantially is all. We do not crave first for God and then for other things which are irrelevant to this desire. But the immediate obstacle to our joy in God may be the bitter lack of some necessity of life, or the loss of some one dearer than life, which obscures like a dark cloud our confidence in God's fatherly love. Or our own sin may be the barrier which separates us from God; or it may be the helpless struggle with temptation; or the horrid incubus of the evil of the world. Whatever be the necessity which threatens to alienate us from God, we shall pray for relief with all the urgency of our desire for God himself.

Such is prayer, and such the significance of the prayer which Jesus taught his disciples.

CHAPTER IV

THY KINGDOM COME

I. *Jesus' Notion of the Kingdom of God.*

23. If we were to pay any heed to the literal form of the petition, 'Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven,' it would furnish us occasion for surprise. Has, then, this kingdom of God not yet come? after all these centuries of Christendom must we still look *forward* to its coming? It requires no great violence to interpret this phrase according to our own meaning. But when we are free to choose our own formulas to express the notion which we honestly entertain, we pray, not for the *coming* of God's kingdom on earth, but for its increase, extension, and perfection. It is true that side by side with this notion we cherish also the conception of a kingdom which is still to come, which lies altogether in a future age, or at least in another sphere, namely, in heaven. But that, according to our notion, is a kingdom which will never 'come on earth'; it is one to which we *go*, for it remains for ever in heaven. So far as God's kingdom can

be thought of as coming on earth, it has already come and needs only to be extended and perfected. Jesus, we conceive, has already brought this kingdom; we realise it in the religious privileges we now enjoy; it is visible in Christendom, and particularly in the Church. With this conception the ardour of our expectation of a heavenly kingdom is somewhat cooled. We have settled ourselves so comfortably in this present world that we can afford to wait.

Jesus, however, knew nothing of this distinction between a kingdom of God on earth and a kingdom in heaven. His mind was engrossed with the thought of one only kingdom, and when he called it 'the kingdom of heaven,' the name was not meant as a local designation, to define its bounds, but rather to describe its character, as a heavenly, divine kingdom,—more properly, as God's kingdom, God's reign, which was presently to be realised upon earth. Jesus was summoned to a prophetic ministry by his conviction of the imminence of this coming kingdom. It was to come terribly soon, joyfully soon. The proclamation of its coming was at once a gospel—that is, glad tidings—and a call to repentance. 'Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' 'Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh.'

Jesus did not exhort his hearers to strive to bring about this reign of God upon earth; for he

conceived that man could neither institute nor perfect it. He conceived that the kingdom of God belonged essentially to a future age and lay altogether in the sphere of the supernatural. God alone could bring it about, and man's effort availed hardly even to prepare *himself* for entrance into such a kingdom. Essentially the kingdom is God's gift, totally incommensurate with the worth of man's moral effort. Man cannot earn it, he can only 'receive' it with childlike simplicity.

There were, it is true, moments of enthusiasm in which Jesus spoke of the kingdom as if it were already a present fact. In his own work, particularly in his miraculous cures of the sick and the possessed, he detected 'the finger of God,' initiating the great conflict with the powers of evil which was to issue in the complete triumph of righteousness. But this only makes it the more evident how thoroughly supernatural was Jesus' conception of the kingdom. He did not expect it to come about as the result of man's ethical development, as the gradual conquest of man's moral effort. There is no hint in the Gospels of our modern notion of natural evolution. The parable of the leaven hid in the meal¹ seems well adapted to express such a notion; but what Jesus sought to illustrate by it was rather the secret marvel of God's working. In considering the parable of the mustard seed² we

¹ Matt. 13 33.

² Matt. 13 31, 32.

need to remember that mustard is a garden herb which shoots up in a summer and therefore aptly illustrates the swift and astounding growth of the kingdom. Jesus must have used a similitude like that of the acorn and the oak had he wished to express the thought of a slow and secular development. In the parable of the farmer who plants his seed and then has nothing that he can do until the harvest,¹ the emphasis is not upon the slow growth of the seed, but upon the marvel of its growth—it ‘springs up and grows’ man knoweth not how. The kingdom likewise comes ‘of itself,’ or rather is the work of God, the giver of the harvest. Man, having done what it is his duty to do, can only wait upon God.

24. Almost all of Jesus’ teaching is concerned more or less directly with the kingdom of God, and to prove that he did *not* entertain the notion we should much like to attribute to him would require us to study in detail the whole record of his sayings. Such negative proof cannot be produced here. But there is one general consideration which helps very much to determine our judgment. Recent study of the Jewish literature contemporary with Jesus has revealed to us how much men’s thoughts were then occupied with fantastic visions of a great world drama in which was to be enacted the final conflict between God and all the powers of evil. This con-

¹ Mark 4 26-29.

flict involved a universal catastrophe out of which was to issue a new heaven and a new earth, fitter than this present world as an eternal habitation for God's ransomed people. One can get a fair notion of this Jewish 'apocalyptic' from the New Testament book called *The Revelation*. The sober messianic expectation of the ancient prophets paled before the glamour of this new dream. It is evident that Jesus framed his representation of the coming kingdom substantially in accordance with this current ideal,¹ and that his own high consciousness of being the King of the messianic era was conceived in the same supernatural terms. It is plain, indeed, that Jesus did not dwell upon the extravagant details of the cosmical drama. His interest was of a different sort, and therefore his representation affects us so differently. But when we know, as we now do, how popular was the apocalyptic literature in the time of Jesus, and when we read the Gospels in the light of this prevalent expectation, we cannot fail to see how thoroughly, in little things and in great, Jesus' thought was determined by the glaring contrast between the here and the hereafter, the present age and the age to come. This explains his indifference to human law, to worldly culture,—in short, to all the greater institutions of civil society which we prize so highly. This

¹ This fact is sure whether or not we accept as genuine the apocalypse in the 13th chapter of St. Mark.

point of view determined the absoluteness and severity of his moral precepts, and in general the whole orientation of his ethics. In his moral teaching Jesus had in view only the simplest relations between man and man; he thought in terms of the individual, and had ever in mind the final judgment in which every man must give an account of himself before God. Jesus did not dwell upon the gradual development of a Christian civilisation. The word kingdom carries to *us* the suggestion of a whole complex of social institutions, it implies an organisation; but to Jesus it meant simply *God's* dominion, *God's* reign; and to him this implied conditions of human life so perfect, so exalted, that they appeared manifestly incompatible with this present world. Such conditions could be realised only beyond the astounding events which the Jews summarily described as 'the last things,'—beyond the historical and cosmical calamities which were to be expected, the general resurrection, the final judgment, and the 'regeneration' of the universe.¹

The kingdom of God is supernatural; hence Jesus conceived that even he, the Christ, called to be the visible exponent of God's rule, could do nothing of himself to bring it about. He rebuked the zealots among the Jews who would take the kingdom of heaven by force, and he himself was

¹ Matt. 19 28.

faithful to the precepts of non-resistance to evil which he inculcated in his disciples. The Messiah was not to gain the mastery of the world by his prowess and wisdom : it was God that must place him upon his throne and bestow upon him the dominion.

25. Nothing is more astounding than the lofty consciousness of Jesus that he was destined to such a dominion. But the more highly he conceived of the kingdom that was to be his, the more incompatible it appeared with his present lowly condition. The moral grandeur of Jesus did not in his own eyes constitute the proper and sufficient glory of the Christ. Until he should appear clothed with a divine power which matched his title Jesus was reluctant to claim the name of king. In a sense he was not *yet* the Christ : the messianic king as well as his kingdom belonged essentially to the coming age. Hence the strange answer he made to the High Priest.¹ He would not directly assert that he was the Christ : he could not flatly deny it, though it were to save his life. Therefore he answered, '*Thou* hast said it.' Then he adds, as the expression of his own claim, words which the High Priest could not but regard as blasphemy because they so far outdid the popular definition of the Christ : 'Nevertheless I say unto you, Henceforth ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the

¹ Matt. 26 63, 64.

right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.' With this knowledge Jesus comforted himself in the hour of death. He came to his death, and the kingdom had not yet come, he was not yet king; but his confidence was unbroken, the kingdom must come, and he must come *again*, in power and glory.

26. Jesus was gone, and the disciples were left with the prayer still upon their lips, 'Thy kingdom come.' But the prayer had now a new significance, a fresh fervour; for the coming of the kingdom now meant the coming again of Jesus. *Maran atha* was their cry—'The Lord cometh.'¹ The resurrection of Jesus and the gift of the Spirit altered nothing in this prayer. The Church was conscious of a new life, and new communion with Christ and God; but highly as the disciples prized these spiritual blessings they did not confound the Kingdom with the Church. The privileges they already enjoyed as the children of God they accounted only a pledge and foretaste of the glory which was to be. St. Paul associates with the kingdom of God the notion of a heavenly perfection which was not attainable in this world as it is now constituted. The kingdom was still to come, and it was coming soon, though the disciples must look for it beyond the great catastrophe. Catholicism early identified the Kingdom

¹ 1 Cor. 16 22.

and the Church.¹ With more historical insight, one of the ablest of the Roman Catholic historians has recently said, 'Christ promised the Kingdom: what came was the Church.' But the earlier disciples of Jesus argued differently. They said, the Church has come; but Christ promised the Kingdom, therefore the Kingdom must come.

II. *Our Expectation.*

27. When we have thus established the historical meaning of the petition, 'Thy kingdom come,' it may be asked whether we of this latter day must be constrained to utter the prayer in precisely the same sense that Jesus and his earliest disciples attached to it. Must we expect and desire the imminent collapse of the universe and the dissolution of this earth by fire?² The question is rather, Can we? For eighteen hundred years the Church has ceased to attach any such significance to this prayer. We have to acknowledge that there is nothing in the teaching of Jesus which appears to us so remote, so foreign to our own thought, so difficult of assimilation, as the form of this conception of the kingdom of God. The Christians of

¹ 'Thy Holy Spirit come upon us and purify us,' is the petition which was substituted for 'Thy kingdom come,' as early as the second century in some manuscripts of St. Luke's Gospel. The Spirit and the Church sufficed that age; they could afford to ignore the kingdom.

² 2 Peter 3 10-13.

long ago, though they shared the antique view of the universe which harmonised with the apocalyptic notion of the kingdom, were unable to maintain the faith in its speedy coming. Time itself had belied that expectation. We, on the other hand, with our totally different conception of the world, are not so much staggered by the delay of the kingdom as by the strangeness of the whole notion. If we are honest enough to confess it to ourselves, we must realise that we do not seriously expect a catastrophe which will involve the sun and all the stars of heaven in the fate of this small planet which is our earth. Our present astronomical knowledge forbids us to entertain the conception that the stars might fall in showers upon the earth. Some cosmical catastrophe there may be, some startling intervention of God in the history of the world. But in the main we rather expect that God will work out his purpose by gradual and orderly means, and with whatsoever religious ardour we have we devote ourselves in the way of our several callings to the amelioration of this world as we now find it. It is vain to palter over the fact that Jesus, if our Gospels correctly report his teaching,¹ or at least his disciples, expected the immediate advent of the kingdom of God, and that in the way it was expected it did not come. This

¹ Mark 13 30, 31 : more characteristic of Jesus is the diffidence of verse 32.

expectation is no longer a common belief of Christendom, and the kingdom idea itself no longer expresses a central interest of our faith.

28. This is merely a statement of fact, yet it is painful to us to concede such facts. We would gladly ignore if we could all differences between our thought and the teaching of Jesus. We are prone to obscure the difference by ingenuities of interpretation. This has been done for nearly two thousand years. But it is no longer possible to ignore the precise character of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom of God, now that we have learned to recognise how central this theme is in all his teaching. To ignore a subject of such import is equivalent to closing the Gospels—closing them just at the time when they are opening to us in a new light and with a new inspiration. It does not appertain to the necessary erudition of a Christian man to apprehend punctually and in its historical objectivity every teaching of the Bible. But whoso refuses to face frankly the historically conditioned form in which Jesus proclaimed the greater part of his message—that is, the form of the Gospel of the kingdom—is precluded also from understanding the essential spirit of his doctrine. To obscure or ignore the precise character of Jesus' teaching in this respect may seem the more pious course, but in reality it is as fatal as if we were altogether to repudiate his substantial teaching. In either case we

cast away the kernel with the husk. We can attribute anything to Jesus, and we can derive nothing certainly from him, so long as we are content to ignore the historical character and definition of his thought.

29. Can we safely distinguish the kernel from the husk? the unalterable verity from the temporal and accidental form? or is this a presumptuous effort? We may say at all events that the effort is inevitable,—in this case not only, but whenever we seek to discover congenial truth in the thought of a remote age. With sympathy and insight it is not impossible to make such a distinction, and nowhere, perhaps, is it so easy as in the teaching of Jesus. Undeniably we can discern what was central in the teaching of Jesus, and from this we can distinguish (which does not necessarily mean to separate and discard), what was less important—in particular, what belongs to the form of his conception and presentation as it was conditioned by the place and age in which he lived. Jesus has made this easy for us, because he himself was constantly intent upon what is vital. It was characteristic, moreover, of Jesus' method in the instruction of his disciples that he employed the most familiar phrases and forms of religious thought and through them led his disciples to the perception of an underlying verity which ultimately demanded a new form and a more adequate expression. Consequently the

historical Gospels do not always give us the last and adequate expression of Jesus' thought. St. John's Gospel expressly endeavoured to do it; this was the aim also of the Epistles in the New Testament and of all subsequent Christian theology. If now, having grown diffident of the ecclesiastical interpretation of Jesus' teaching, we turn rather to his own words, it is not that we abjure the effort to interpret him, it is only that we would interpret him more profoundly, more truly, and in terms congenial to our own time. Jesus employed the language and the formulas of his own time: we must understand him in the language of our time—a time to the making of which he himself has largely contributed. In spite of his own proverb, Jesus himself did habitually pour his new wine into old wine skins. The skins have perished, but the wine has not been spilled. Will any one affirm that it is impossible to distinguish the bottles from the wine?

30. Without prejudice to other aspects of the doctrine of the kingdom of God, one may ask what was the central and most vital truth which it expressed.

a. It expressed with the utmost energy of conviction one thought of enduring significance, namely, that this world, in the history of its physical changes and human labour, is not the sport of aimless forces, that it does not revolve in cycles end-

lessly repeated, as the pessimist dismally conceives, but has in God's eternal purpose its proper conclusion, end, and goal. In short, the Gospel of the kingdom fixes our expectation upon

‘ The one far-off divine event
Towards which the whole creation moves.’

b. If this universal consummation appears too remote to fire our zeal or satisfy our desire, we may think of our own personal fate and consider how swiftly we are approaching what to us is the most stupendous event we shall ever encounter, the most momentous transformation we shall ever experience. Our entrance into a new life upon another stage of existence must change this universe *for us* as thoroughly as an apocalyptic prophet ever dreamed. It was Jesus who taught us to look hopefully beyond the grave; and after his resurrection the thought of heaven was bound to occupy much of the field covered originally by the notion of the kingdom. These two thoughts are formally very different, but substantially not so diverse. At all events we do not commonly live in the expectation that another world will ‘ come ’ in the place of this : we rather expect to go hence and enter the other world. The ‘ regeneration ’ of the physical universe, though it were to involve this earth in hideous ruin, could not prove more momentous to us than the dissolution of our body. In that event we

expect an individual regeneration which shall mean another apprehension of the world, wider relations with it, new faculties to use and to enjoy it.

It is surely no small thing that in the Gospel of the kingdom Jesus has fixed our hope expectantly upon the portal of another world, enabling us to believe that death will prove a birth into a more spacious life, the experience of a closer or more conscious relation to God. In this hope we pray, 'Father, thy kingdom come.' We recall the Beatitudes of Jesus, as though they were uttered expressly in view of such a hope: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Actually, all of the Beatitudes were uttered in view of the coming kingdom, yet with hardly a hint of change they can be transposed into the region of our present thought. So universal is the teaching of Jesus! So independent of mutable form is the abiding truth!

What Jesus has at heart to say in the Beatitudes is not that each virtue shall have its special and apposite reward, but that all virtues will be richly rewarded. Shall not the meek also see God, and the pure in heart obtain mercy? And must all wait to obtain the 'great reward in heaven' until the final dissolution of this world?

c. Even those who are most impressed by the mutability of all doctrinal forms of thought are commonly ready to admit that the moral precepts

of Jesus possess abiding worth, that in their literal form and sense they express directly the universal character of human obligation. And yet, in point of fact, the whole orientation of Jesus' ethics was determined by his idea of the kingdom of God and the expectation of its near approach. Apart from this connection of thought the moral precepts of Jesus could not have been so sharply defined or so trenchantly pronounced. But having been thus uttered once for all, their force remains unabated though the primitive notion of the kingdom has vanished from the recollection of the Church. The Gospel of the kingdom expressed the conviction that all right moral conduct is pertinent to human welfare,—not necessarily in this world, but assuredly in the world to come. Here the deed, there the reward; here the effort, there the attainment. Jesus could not tolerate any moral precept, or even a ritual exaction, which was irrelevant to man's welfare.¹ On the other hand, he was in no danger of degrading his ethical doctrine to the level of common sense and worldly expediency. It is not from Jesus we learn the maxim, Be virtuous and you will be happy. Not prudence but heroism was the keynote of his ethics. He repudiated the dogma of the old Hebrew moralists, who thought that they could maintain the righteousness of God only by the assertion that his justice is manifested

¹ Mark 2 27.

perfectly in this present world. Jesus laid stress chiefly upon such virtues as meekness, mercifulness, peaceableness, thirst after righteousness, heroism in facing persecution and reproach,—and all of them, as Jesus himself clearly saw, are irrelevant if not quite contrary to success in life. They mean not the saving of one's life but the losing of it,—as Jesus expressly recognised. But, according to Jesus, these virtues are strictly pertinent to man's welfare in the world to come; for laid up in heaven, awaiting the manifestation of the kingdom, there is a 'great reward.' Such is the expectation Jesus taught his disciples to associate with the prayer, 'Thy kingdom come.' So thoroughly is this our own expectation that we hardly feel the formal difference in our conception of the kingdom.

d. It is evident that we do not minimise Jesus' teaching when we seek to apprehend the essence of it. Jesus makes this task easy for us, for he himself has eliminated much that was accidental and all that was unworthy in the current Jewish conception of the coming age. There is great significance in the name he promptly chose to designate this good time to come. The kingdom of God was a name the Jews rarely used. They preferred to call it 'the kingdom of the saints,' and by this name, or others like it, expressed their egoistic interest in the coming age. They looked forward to it as *their* kingdom, the triumph of their national revenge.

Jesus, though he felt himself destined to the throne of this kingdom, never called it *My* kingdom. He called it habitually *God's* kingdom, and in his prayer he says, '*Thy* kingdom. By this title every trace of Jewish chauvinism is eliminated: the whole interest is centred, comprised, concluded in God. The kingdom of God is good tidings, it promises happiness to men; but that only because the consummation of God's reign, the performance of God's will, is the prime condition of human welfare.

e. The blessings of God's reign are enumerated in the Beatitudes, they are summarised in the word 'Eternal life.' Jesus himself used this word almost as an equivalent for the kingdom, and St. John's Gospel made this word a substitute for kingdom. A substitute was needed, for the kingdom idea with its peculiar Jewish connotations was as foreign to the Christians whom St. John addressed as it is now to us. We ourselves generally employ this substitute, and in doing so we are satisfied to reflect that it is the word Jesus himself used,¹ if not to express all that is denoted by the kingdom, at least as a compendious expression for the *blessings* of God's reign. In the petition, '*Thy* kingdom come,' we rightly conceive that Jesus taught his disciples to pray for everlasting life. That was indeed their principal aspiration in offering this prayer, so far as

¹ Matt. 7 14; 25 46; Mark 9 43, 45; 10 17, 30.

it concerned themselves, though it is not the whole idea of the kingdom.

The idea of the kingdom fixed a gulf betwixt this world and the world to come : the idea of life eternal bridges this gulf. The early Christians soon come to dwell as little as we do upon the prospect of a universal catastrophe : they dwelt rather upon life and death as the expression of man's individual fate. In the experience of a life in Christ they discovered already so many blessings that the future seemed half pledged in advance. The Christian had already a foretaste of the world to come. Even in this world he had experience of eternal life. Life such as this must persist, it was believed ; and whatever increment of life the future may have in store, life hereafter will not be incongruous with the Christian's life here. 'Now are we the sons of God, and though it is not yet made manifest what we shall be, we know that'—we shall but realise more perfectly what it is to be God's sons.¹ By thus paraphrasing St. John's words we surely do no violence to his thought. With the experience of eternal life as a present blessing—life *now and* for ever,—with the experience of divine sonship as a present privilege, with the reflection that life is continuous and in its utmost attainments still congruous with life now, the hereafter loses not only its strangeness and terror, but also its *exclusive* claim upon our interest. When

¹ 1 John 3 2.

we pray, 'Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven,' we properly dwell upon the Christian privileges which we may be permitted here and now to enjoy. But we dare not dwell upon this alone; for when we close the door into the other world which Jesus has thrown wide open in his Gospel of the kingdom, we darken hope, disable faith, extinguish religion, perplex morality, and in the end we discover that the prize we have grasped is dust and ashes if it is not eternal. Other men, who practice the virtues adapted to the life that now is, may here enjoy the temporal good they seek. We who are following the maxims of 'other-worldliness' are of all men most pitiable—to use St. Paul's phrase—if there be no other world.

III. *Christ our Hope.*

31. We have already remarked that after the death of Jesus his disciples attached a new meaning to the petition, 'Thy kingdom come.' It meant then the return of Christ, the messianic King. King and kingdom are correlative terms: we cannot rightly understand the one so long as we are content to ignore the proper meaning of the other. As a matter of fact, the title Christ has not for us the same interest that it had for the Apostolic Church. To us it is hardly more than a proper name. Even in the New Testament it is often used as the name rather than as the title of Jesus. But Jesus himself

found in this title the expression of his unique character and lofty eminence: it helped to explain him to himself. All the greater experiences of his public and private (or inward) life are explained by his consciousness of this dignity and his claim of this title. The early disciples—St. John and St. Paul among them,—though they sought various terms to describe what they had discovered in Jesus, found none so adequate as the title Christ.

If this title now seems to us insufficient, it is chiefly because we are accustomed to associate with it the form of messianic expectation which was prevalent in the Old Testament, which regards the Christ as a sort of Jewish *Imperator*. This, assuredly, Jesus was not. He himself was conscious of being far more than this; and when the Evangelists interest themselves in the scriptural proof that Jesus is the Christ, they conceive that they are proving more than the Old Testament Scriptures assert about the Christ. If it can be proved that he is the Christ foretold by the Old Testament prophets, it needs no further proof that he is the Christ of the apocalyptic expectation. It is clear that when Jesus called himself ‘the Son of man’ he drew his conception from the Book of Daniel,¹ which is the one apocalyptic prophecy in the Old Testament. He himself speaks in the terms of Jewish apocalyptic when he prophesies:

¹ Daniel 7 13.

‘But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall be falling from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then shall he send forth his angels, and shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the uttermost part of the earth to the uttermost part of heaven.’¹

32. Again we must ask, Is it possible for us to entertain such a conception of the Christ? and do we expect his coming in this wise? Within a century after Jesus’ death his disciples were compelled to exclaim, ‘Where is the promise of his coming? For from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.’² We must frankly admit that the expectation of Jesus’ ‘coming’ is rather a perfunctory part of our faith. What we express with fervour in our prayers and hymns is the expectation that we shall go to him. In form, our expectation is totally different. But is it after all so different in substance? St. Paul commonly conceived in apocalyptic terms of the coming of Christ, and expected before his death to witness this event,³ yet even he in more sober moments could speak of

¹ Mark 13 24-27.

² 2 Peter 3 4.

³ 1 Thess. 4 15-17; 1 Cor. 15 52.

his 'desire to *depart* and be with Christ—for it is very far better.'¹ What in St. Paul was an occasional mood has become our common expectation.

33. We habitually ignore many of the messianic notions which are historically involved in the title Christ. But this is not to say that the name is no longer precious to us and can no longer be serviceable. On the contrary, the title Christ is not only broadly characteristic of the New Testament estimate of Jesus, it represents also what is most sure to abide in that estimate. Extremes meet, and what conservative Romanists and Protestants alike denounce as 'Modernism' is in reality far more closely related to the primitive conception of Christianity than is any species of doctrine which was developed between that time and ours. The Modernist might claim to be more of an antiquarian than the Mediævalist. His interest attaches him to a period a thousand years earlier. The mediæval dogma, which historically is so close to us and still so broadly conditions our religious conceptions, seems nevertheless to our modern thought far more remote than Apostolic Christianity. There is the same sense of remoteness in studying the early Catholic dogma. The theologians of the third and fourth centuries were chiefly interested in defining the pre-eminence of Jesus in terms of substance,—that is, according to the category most emphasised

¹ Phil. 1 23.

in the prevailing philosophy. The definition of the Catholic creeds that Jesus is of 'the same substance' with God does not interest us so much. It seems indeed lamentably inadequate. The belief that Jesus was of the same *character* with God seems to us to describe him more amply, and to define him more essentially,—for we count nothing so essential as the will. What we justly value most highly in the Gospels is the fact that they depict for us the character of Jesus. Yet it is perfectly certain that to define Jesus in terms of his character or his moral likeness to God is not to express the whole or even the most express interest of the Apostolic Church. The title Christ, the title Son of God (as the Hebrew mind understood it), the title Son of Man (as Jesus used it), in short, every name that was applied to Jesus, essayed to define his unique importance, not in terms of substance, nor of character, but in more pragmatic terms, in terms of his actual historical *position* with reference both to God and to man. He is the revelation of God to men, he is the light of the world, the Way to God, the captain of our salvation, the head of the human race. This pragmatic and historical conception of the unique place and importance of Jesus history has confirmed and is daily confirming. Substantially, whatever has changed in our messianic expectation, the title Christ (the ideal King) abides as the most adequate

and the best approved of all the definitions of Jesus. This was his definition of himself, and dare we set up another definition which would exclude from the Church a man who confesses that Jesus is the Christ? This practical estimate of Jesus—an estimate at once religious and moral—is reflected in the designation ‘Lord,’ the most familiar designation used in the Apostolic Church, and one which more than any other obscures, if we may so say, the distinction between Christ and God. The acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord is the Christian theology; reverence to him as Lord is the Christian religion; obedience to him as Lord is the Christian morality.

Jesus first kindled in men’s hearts the moral purpose which is capable of uniting mankind in one aim. He first proclaimed the ideal of loving God with all the heart and one’s neighbour as one’s self. Others may now proclaim this ideal, thinking themselves independent of Jesus; but *he first did it*. Others may share and propagate his purpose, knowing not whence they got it; but he first kindled it, and whosoever shares this inspiration shares Jesus’ life, is united in his body. To all that are subdued to his commandments, though they do not know him, Jesus is Lord, and one day they shall know him.¹

When we reflect by how much, and by how

¹ Matt. 25 34-40.

much the better part of us, we are already united to Christ, though unconsciously, we can conceive how 'very far better' is that state where we shall be conscious of all that unites us to him. Death is terrible not so much for any agony we guess in the experience itself as for the unknown which lies beyond. Christ is the known factor in this unknown world. Though we dare not pray for death, and cannot in a normal state desire it; yet we may leap over that experience, and, in terms of the petition which he himself taught us, and without altering substantially its meaning, we may express our desire to depart and be with Christ.

CHAPTER V

THY WILL BE DONE

1. *The Essence of the Kingdom.*

34. In studying the petition, ‘Thy will be done,’ we need to remember that it does not stand alone, but unites with the two preceding petitions to express in triple form our first and deepest religious desire. These three petitions are not identical, but by reason of the verbs which accidentally are required to complete them they appear more diverse than they really are. The verb, coming at the end of the phrase, as it must in our English version of the Lord’s Prayer, naturally receives the chief stress, and hence obscures the connection. We can best observe the connection in a schematic form which omits all except the words which deserve emphasis: Father, *Thy* Name, *Thy* Kingdom, *Thy* Will,—As in heaven, so on earth. The three petitions serve to explain one another, and unite to express the whole idea of the kingdom. The third petition shows where lay the emphasis of Jesus’ thought. His interest evidently was not fixed upon the form

of the kingdom, nor upon the time and manner of its coming; his central and absorbing thought was that God shall reign, his will be done. Here we discover the essence of Jesus' religion, and we may perceive that all the elements which to us appear strange, accidental, or transitory, in the Jewish notion of the kingdom are here as good as discarded.

35. Although the concluding phrase, 'As in heaven, so on earth,' belongs to the whole group of petitions, it follows with special propriety the last. God's will is the consideration which unifies our thought of heaven and earth, of the here and the hereafter. The earth is but a fragment of the universe, its history in time is but a fragment of eternity; the whole can be conceived only in relation to God's eternal purpose, 'the one far-off divine event.' Even here and now—and as much here as anywhere, as much now as ever—God's will is operating to effect his purpose. What we see is but a fragment; by faith we apprehend

'That all, as in some piece of art,
Is toil co-operant to an end.'

36. To this end we also co-operate by our human labour, be its contribution never so small. Our co-operation, however, must be directed by God, since we do not see the end, neither can conceive the design. Conscience dictates the will of God:

what is right, we are convinced, is in the line of God's purpose; what is wrong runs athwart it. Shrewdness and understanding may direct us successfully in what we may call the lesser tactics of life : strategy—that is, co-operation in God's greater plan—requires wisdom. Wisdom, using the word in its highest sense, does not mean far-sighted and prudent calculation, but subjection to the one good will which contemplates the whole; it means obedience to duty, or what the Hebrews called 'the fear of the Lord.'¹ The feeling of duty itself gives us no assurance that what we contribute to the general welfare, to the perfection of the whole design, is profitable to us individually. But of this we are assured by the promises of Jesus and by our faith in the righteousness of God.

Even if we were to think of our labour as directed solely to our individual happiness and perfection, duty must still be our guide, and obedience the stamp of our endeavour. For not only is our life a fragment of the general whole; our short life here, within the limits of our prevision, bounded by the horizon of death, is but a fragment of our individual whole. No prudent calculation can determine what actions will ultimately profit us. Moreover, wise men, like the 'Preacher' of the Old Testament, having in view only the limited horizon this side the grave, find reason to despair of

¹ Job 28 28.

prudently directing towards the attainment of happiness the vain labour wherein man laboureth under the sun. If, therefore, the manifold changes and chances of this mortal life defy our shrewdest calculations and defeat our most laborious endeavours, what folly it is to be wise about the other world, to guide our conduct by precepts of expedience towards the attainment of an end we cannot see, under conditions we cannot guess! We can only believe that the right is also the best for us and for all. We need a faculty to direct our conduct in conformity with the chief end of life, but what madness it is to suppose that the understanding is such a faculty. The parent is a child's safe guide, for he knows the conditions of mature life for which childhood is a preparation. God alone knows the conditions of that life for which we are now preparing. The imperative of conscience must be absolute and obedience blind; but we have reason to trust the voice of duty when we learn to know it as the expression of the good will of our heavenly Father.

37. Such are the humble conditions of human life and such the limitations of the human understanding. To these conditions Jesus himself was subjected, and perhaps in no other respect is he so perfectly our pattern as in the meek perception that God's will and not his own marks the path in which he must tread. He, because he was sent

upon the highest duty, found his path the more severely prescribed. Jesus conceived of human life, and of his own in particular, as subject to obedience, and in no other wise to be well and rightly led. He feared God too much to stray from his commandments. This fear was his defence in temptation¹ and at the same time the ground of his boldness before the world.² Students of the life of Jesus commonly wonder that the Evangelists do not attempt to account for his determination to go up to Jerusalem in spite of the apprehension that there he must meet his death. Is it not reason enough that he felt it to be his *duty*, regardless of consequences, to make himself known as the Christ in the official centre of Judaism? If, as we have reason to believe, it was chiefly in his solitary prayers that Jesus sought and learned and accepted the will of God, then no wonder the motives which controlled him were hidden from his disciples and his conduct appeared strange to them.³

38. There is something very new and notable in the way in which Jesus speaks of the will of God. He expresses a thought which was by no means familiar to the Jews. They thought always of the Law: the Law in its 'ten thousand precepts' was their *ultimate* authority. Jesus habitually went back of the Law, for he valued the Law only as the expression of God's will. This seems a simple

¹ Matt. 4 4, 7, 10.

² Matt. 10 28.

³ Mark 10 32.

thought enough, yet it was revolutionary. It enabled Jesus to define (as the Jews from their point of view could not) what are the 'weightier matters of the Law,'¹ which is the first, which the second commandment,² that is to say, what commandments express most essentially God's will. With this new conception Jesus liberated himself and his disciples from the tyranny of the letter. It was he that perceived the principle, though he left it to St. Paul to carry out the revolutionary consequence. The Jews liked to describe the coming kingdom as 'the reign of the Law.' Jesus called it 'God's reign.' The Jews were ambitious to impose upon a subject world the ancient tribal customs of Israel which were registered in their law. This they expected to accomplish fully in the coming age; but even in this world they would 'compass sea and land to make one proselyte.'³ Jesus desired in this and in the coming age only that God's will be done.

39. Jesus had, in fact, no sectarian or proselyting aim. He himself did the will of God, and in doing it he sought to win others to subjection unto the same rule, the good will of the heavenly Father,—that is, he desired to unite men in a common moral purpose. According to the first three Gospels, Jesus did not make belief a condition of discipleship,—though to follow Jesus was, of course, a

¹ Matt. 23 23.

² Mark 12 28-34.

³ Matt. 23 15.

practical expression¹ of a man's attitude towards him, of a man's faith in him, but not of a definite belief about him. What Jesus did exact of all his disciples was that they should do the will of God. One of his parables put the critical question, 'Which of the two did the will of his father?'¹ What he demanded was not profession but performance. He says, 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.'² 'Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother.'³

40. The Fourth Gospel—the great interpretation of Jesus—amply displays the trait upon which we have been dwelling. Jesus exclaims with joy, 'My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.'⁴ Again he says in a different tone, recognising the contrast between the Father's will and his own, 'I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.'⁵ In spite of the predominant emphasis in this Gospel upon the importance of belief, the *will to do* is first, the doctrine second: 'If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching whether it be of God.'⁶ Performance is here, too, the essential condition of discipleship: 'Ye are my friends, if ye do

¹ Matt. 21 31.

² Matt. 12 50; Mark 3 35.

³ John 5 30; cp. 6 38.

² Matt. 7 21.

⁴ John 4 34.

⁶ John 7 17.

the things which I command you.’¹ ‘If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I keep my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.’²

The fact is, in spite of a specious appearance to the contrary, that St. John does not make knowledge all in all, or even first of all. The knowledge which he exalted as the object of faith is not a theological theory, but a practical acquaintance with Jesus Christ. The name Jesus, therefore, rather than any title of theological import, remains his favourite appellation for the Lord. The knowledge of Jesus is light, therefore it is our instant duty to ‘walk in the light.’³ In the long farewell address of Jesus the stress is insistent upon his commandments. This emphasis is maintained in the First Epistle: ‘He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar.’ He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked.’⁴ The prime thing is to do righteousness,⁵ to avoid sin, to love in *deed*.⁶ The essential confession of faith is ‘that Jesus Christ is come *in the flesh*.’⁷ Jesus’ human example—acquaintance with him, not knowledge about him—subdues men to obedience and unites them in a common moral purpose. Such was St. John’s perception. Such, in reality, was Jesus’ aim.

¹ John 15 14. ² John 15 10. ³ 1 John 1 7. ⁴ 1 John 2 4, 6.
⁵ 1 John 3 7. ⁶ 1 John 3 18. ⁷ 1 John 4 2.

II. *God's Blessed Will.*

41. To do the will of God is the best and happiest thing in the world, for it is the will of our heavenly Father, the supreme good will which desires the welfare of each and all. It is significant that Jesus constantly spoke of the will of God as his Father's will. The will of God was to him anything but a bare abstraction. Even when he felt God's will as a constraint he never conceived of it as a bondage,—so well assured was he of his Father's goodness. It would hardly be correct to characterise Jesus' acceptance of his Father's will as an act of submission: he welcomed it, rejoiced in it, and even in the darkest moment of his life he *prayed*, 'Thy will be done.' True prayer is the expression of desire: it is never a mere profession of resignation.

42. Jesus taught his disciples to pray—that is, to make petition with desire,—'Thy will be done.' Yet for us how often is this petition an expression of genuine desire? Do not most Christians sigh when they say, God's will be done? As though the divine will were hostile, or at least indifferent, to our welfare! We show ourselves very unthankful if we recognise God's will only in the instances where we feel it most as running counter to our own. It is proof of great obtuseness if we perceive God's will only in the more tragic fates of life, in the wreck of our hopes, in the loss of our dearest ones. Yet it would seem as though some Christians

perceive the will of God only in the sudden fate which snatches an infant from its mother's breast, a son from his father's arms. Jesus said, 'It is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.'¹ Jesus was not disposed to affirm that everything which happens in the world is an expression of God's will. *There* we have a problem for the metaphysicians. About such problems Jesus did not trouble himself. His interest lay in the sphere of religious experience. The experience of religion, if ever it comes to pure and untrammelled expression, affirms the assurance that whatever befalls a child of God to affect his personal destiny is an instance of God's fatherly dealing. But unless we are attentive to detect God's will in all the manifest good that comes to us, we shall not be able to believe that the good will persists in the obscure experience where we cannot see the issue.

43. To dwell especially upon the dark dispensations of God's will when we make this petition of the Lord's Prayer is to pervert its proper spirit. Again we must remember that this is a part of the triple petition for the kingdom of God and its attendant blessings. What we desire to see done in this kingdom is the will of the King who, knowing all, knows what is best for all. We cannot conceive of our own happiness as complete apart from the happiness of others. We may be content to asso-

¹ Matt. 18 14.

ciate few concrete notions with the idea of the kingdom of God; but at least we must conceive it in social terms, as a commonwealth in which the need of all shall be satisfied. Jesus pictured such a kingdom as existing in heaven, waiting to be manifested on earth. But we know already what the laws of this heavenly realm are, and we can even now live accordingly,—we need not wait for the kingdom to come or for all men to agree to obey these laws. What St. James calls ‘the royal law’ is binding here as well as in heaven. God’s will ought to be our rule of life now and for ever. Plato in his sketch of an ideal republic relates how Socrates met the objection that such a city nowhere exists on earth. ‘In heaven, I replied, there is laid up a pattern of such a city, and he who desires may behold this, and beholding, govern himself accordingly. But whether there really is or will be such an one is of no importance to him; for he will act according to the laws of that city and of no other.’¹ So thought a disciple of Socrates. Can the disciples of Christ not say as much?

The joy and confidence which the Christian rightly expects to experience in his religion is not to be found save in knowing and doing God’s will. The man who counts himself already a citizen of the heavenly kingdom must desire before all else to learn the laws of that kingdom, that by following

¹ *The Republic*, end of Book ix.

them he may confirm his boast of citizenship. But he will not be content with knowing the general laws: he will not be happy till he is assured of the special task which the King assigns him here, God's will for him individually.

44. There is a deep and serious import in the words 'calling' and 'vocation' which we commonly use so carelessly. No man can rightly remain content 'in that state of life into which it hath pleased God to call' him, unless he is convinced that God has really *called* him. If devotion is earnest, if it pervades the whole week and controls the common actions of our daily life, in short, if it is a religious *life* and not a mere cult, the question must be instant and urgent, How can I find my true vocation and ministry? Immersed as I am in the ordinary business of the world, how shall I make it clear to myself that in the common tasks of life the service of God is my profession? Once at least in a lifetime the petition, 'Thy will be done,' is charged with an especial meaning, is urgent with the importunate inquiry, What is God's will *for me*? We shall not be satisfied until that prayer is answered, and to each of us the answer must be a personal revelation. It may be that we are free to choose the particular profession which seems to give fullest scope to our faculties; or we may be shut up by some necessity to one sphere of effort, large or small. It matters not. God's calling is at least as

manifest in necessity as in liberty. If only we know that this lot, this place, this task, represents our divine vocation, we have the answer to our prayer; and in following our calling we shall learn the joy of Christian confidence. Only we must beware lest we erect this confidence into a barrier against all new admonitions of God's will, lest in a false security of vocation we cherish the very limitations of our lot as a defence against God's call to a larger or more arduous task which sluggishness or cowardness prompts us to refuse. There is a divine discontent which spurs us to renew the importunate inquiry, Thy will be done—what is thy will for me?

The best work in any worldly profession cannot be done without a sense of vocation. It may be but a vaguely religious sense; but to know that we are in the right place and are doing our proper work inspires us with the confidence which is requisite for efficiency in the higher callings of worldly life. Far greater is the boldness of those, be they high or low, who are assured that they are doing *God's* work. 'If God is for us, who against us?'¹ The lack of such boldness is a reproach to a Christian. Above all, how dare they be timorous who follow the high calling of the Gospel ministry? Jesus had it much at heart to teach his disciples to be bold. Courage was one of the prime conditions

¹ Rom. 8 31.

of the missionary calling for which he was preparing them. When he taught them so impressively to fear God,¹ he was laying the foundation of Christian courage. The fear of God makes us bold, for it frees us from all other and meaner fears. The first and last word of Jesus in this connection is 'Fear not.'² In the fear of God, that is, in the dutiful performance of his will, we learn the secret of that boldness which St. Paul occasionally professed³ and more frequently displayed. We perceive also that such fear of God, because it issues in the faithful performance of his commandments, is consistent with 'boldness' even before him,—as St. John affirms, promising boldness in prayer and boldness in view of the final Judgment.⁴

III. *Duty as a Cross.*

45. Believing that God's will is the good will of our heavenly Father, it is natural to welcome it and to pray for it. But who can ignore the fact that there come moments when the prayer, 'Thy will be done,' is a faltering petition? We are hardly aware that it is God's will that is shaping our life until we are conscious of it in its distinction from our will, namely, when it thwarts our desire. The swimmer is not aware of the current unless it runs counter to

¹ Matt. 10 28.

² Matt. 10 26 31.

³ 2 Cor. 3 12, 7 4; Phil. 1 20; Philemon 8.

⁴ 1 John 2 28, 3 21, 4 17, 5 14.

his course. Hence we know duty as the 'stern daughter of the voice of God.' I have said that the Lord's Prayer is throughout a rule of desire, and here this rule must often be felt as a curb. 'Not my will, but thine,' becomes the sense of this petition. The moral life is a progress towards the perfection of the will. Each rise in the ascent is due to a definite discipline of the will, which is conditioned by the experience that God's will is not our own. To feel God's will in its sharp distinction from ours is to know it as duty. The great symbol of duty is the Cross.

The darkest experiences the Christian knows are those in which his desire after God's will, if indeed it persists in the obscure dispensation with which he wrestles, persists only as a reflection of happier experiences of the past, and as an expression of habitual confidence in God's goodness. In such moments the utmost we can say is, '*Nevertheless*, not my will but thine be done.'

46. Such a moment Jesus himself had to endure in the garden of Gethsemane. Yet this word *nevertheless* is not the utterance of despair and defeat. We misconceive this experience of Jesus and the common experience of Christians when we call it resignation. We fancy that we are using a pious phrase when we speak of 'resignation to God's blessed will.' But the moment we know God's will as *blessed*, we are prompted to a glad

conformity which cannot even be called submission. In fact, resignation is not at all a Christian virtue. It ought to be no part of a Christian's experience. Resignation is properly a pagan experience, conditioned by belief in an impersonal, indifferent, unalterable fate, against which it is useless to cope and futile to cry out. Resignation is defeat—a proud defeat, it may be—but the Christian is never defeated. We are 'pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not forsaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed.'¹

47. The name of this Christian experience is Patience. Patience denotes warfare—it clearly does not mean victory, but it is equally far from defeat. We erroneously use this word as if it were synonymous with resignation, and meant to lie down under God's heavy dispensation with the hand before the mouth. The great 'nevertheless' of Jesus' prayer meant that he was still on his feet. The man who endures his conflict in patience still *stands*, shield upon arm, hand upon hilt. Defeat itself may seem preferable to conflict, it may seem easier to 'renounce God and die.'² Patience denotes the stage of conflict which hovers between victory and defeat: defeated, we have recklessly cast patience away; victorious, we have no longer need of it.³ In the

¹ 2 Cor. 4 8, 9.

² Job 29.

³ W. Herrmann, art. 'Geduld,' *Herzog's Real Encyclopedie*, third ed.

New Testament, patience is associated with hope ; and, obviously, without hope it would be impossible for the conflict to endure. But when our hope has been attained, and the obscurity of God's dealing illuminated, we have already issued from the conflict of patience. Others, then, who know nothing of the secret comfort that has relieved us, may praise our silent endurance as patience, whereas *we* know that it is the tired serenity of victory. While we are in that conflict we prove our patience, we show our faith in God and our abiding interest in him, better by crying out loudly against his inexplicable dealings than by the silence of a forced acquiescence. We *must* wrestle and cry out until we have found God again, and surmounted the barrier which his dark dispensation has reared between us and him. 'Ye have heard of the patience of Job,'¹ yet who ever complained more outrageously than he? This magnificent poem begins with Job's solemn curse upon the day of his birth, and every speech rings with protest. The man was too honest to justify God's hard dealing by renouncing his own integrity, yet *nevertheless* he clamoured for some sign of God's righteousness. In that *nevertheless* lay the whole conflict.

The conflict of patience is possible only in the man who has a lofty faith in God's goodness, and finds it obscured in the immediate discipline which

¹ James 5 II.

he endures. This conflict, bitter as it is, is not a useless experience, for it is a transition struggle and a stage of progress. Therefore, says St. Paul, 'Let us also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, probation; and probation, hope.'¹ And St. James says, 'Count it all joy when ye fall into manifold trials, knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience; and let patience have its perfect work.'²

Patience is 'the proof of faith,' yet to us, while we still labour in this conflict, uncertain of the outcome, the experience seems rather to prove our lack of faith. We are never so sensible of the weakness of our faith as when we falter at the petition, 'Thy will be done,' and stammer out our 'nevertheless.' But in that 'nevertheless' there is hidden more true faith than we display in our most complacent prayers when God's will seems consonant with our desire. Faith is a persistent energy; but, like electricity, it does not always manifest itself in light and heat: it may be doing in the dark its utmost of dynamic work.

Without patience it would be impossible to maintain continuity in our religious life. For our progress is not a steady ascent. It is marked by recurrent intervals of dejection. By patience we traverse these intervals; and out of the experience of patience we emerge upon a higher station of

¹ Roman 5 3, 4.

² James 1 2-4.

our way, in a clearer light, in view of broader horizons.

‘Thy will be done.’ No other petition of the Lord’s Prayer is so sensitive to reflect the colour of our immediate experience. If we have treasured any recollection of our past use of this petition, upon the heights and in the depths, we shall find that it records the stages of our progress and registers the altitude of our ascent.

CHAPTER VI

HEAVEN AND EARTH

I. *Traditional Notions.*

48. The phrase, 'As in heaven, so on earth,' has already been considered incidentally in its bearing upon each member of the first triple petition. It needs, however, to be considered more at large and by itself. For do not these two words 'heaven' and 'earth' introduce the whole question of our *Weltanschauung*, as the Germans call it—the question in what manner we conceive of the world? So great a matter is not out of place in so short and simple a prayer. For religion, though it ought to be simple, is always great: it comprises in its view the whole universe, and must picture in some way what the world is, if only in order to conceive of God's relation to the world. This is not to say that a man cannot cherish a noble religion without a correct view of the universe. But indubitably it is dangerous to entertain at once two different views of the universe—the one for Sundays, and the other for week days. This must inevitably

mean that we keep our religion in an air-tight compartment, sundered from life, and that we struggle to maintain the dogmas of our faith by shutting our eyes. A religion that has to be coddled may be a consoling diversion, but it can offer us no strong comfort in our need. The shock which startles us to a sense of our religious need, startles us likewise to the apprehension of realities without us—it makes us open our eyes. Religion which rests merely upon tradition can never be strong. The ground of all genuine religious conviction is personal experience—the experience of God in the actual world, an individual revelation. Such a revelation, though we experience it at but a single point, summons us to relate our thought of God to the whole world—the actual world as we know it.

49. It is only about half a century since the works of Copernicus ceased to appear in the Roman Index of prohibited books. What an anachronism! we exclaim, that unto this late date the Roman Church should formally condemn the elementary notions of astronomy which are taught to every child at school! But how has it been with us Protestants? There has, it is true, been no show of religious authority to prohibit us from believing that the earth revolves daily on its own axis, and yearly about the sun; that the sun with its attendant planets is moving still more swiftly

toward an end we cannot divine ; and that whatever horror there may be of crashing worlds, it is preposterous to imagine that the greater suns which we call stars might ever 'fall in showers upon the earth.' All of this we are free to believe, being indeed compelled to believe it ; but into the sphere of our religious thought we do not commonly suffer such notions to intrude. Certainly most persons do not attempt to formulate their religious beliefs in terms of our modern conception of the universe. As religious men, and for our Sunday use, we have not frankly accepted the Copernican astronomy.

I am not interested in what is called the reconciliation of science and religion ; but I perceive it to be a matter of vital importance that we hold our religion with wide-open eyes, and seek to express it concordantly with what we know (or be it only what we think we know) about the actual universe. Then we shall be able to believe that God is no less actual than the things which we see and touch. It may be hoped that our theology will then prove a compulsory power in the real world, exacting a consistent morality.

About the earth we have such definite scientific knowledge that religious traditions can hardly affect our conceptions of it. But heaven is a different case. Here our thought is commonly determined by tradition, though we have in fact no

tradition which can claim any binding authority. This is the one important theme of religious interest about which men have been left free to speculate, unhampered by definite tests of orthodoxy. Dante depicted heaven in one way; Milton, in another: either would be about equally congenial to the Roman Catholic, and hardly any probable opinion would attract official censure among Protestants.

50. If it be asked how we can arrive at any knowledge of such a subject apart from tradition, we may reflect that the tradition itself had its beginning in human speculation, and that the traditions which now determine our common conception of heaven obviously do not come to us in the straight line of Scriptural revelation. What we owe to Jesus is not a picture of the conditions which await us in heaven, but simply the assurance of eternal life. The Old Testament furnishes us with no picture of a heaven which is to be the abode of human spirits: it conceived of no such place, for it regarded heaven as the abode only of God and his angels. The soul of man after death might lead a shadowy existence in sheol; but the Old Testament reveals no steady or definite expectation of life beyond the grave. It is not quite clear from what foreign source this expectation was derived. Obviously it was not an original Hebrew belief, for it emerged in later Judaism as a peculiar

tenet of the Pharisees. The conception of the Pharisees appears to have been grossly material.¹ Jesus himself, while he freed the conception of its grossness,² expected nevertheless that man will not live after death in a remote heaven, but in God's kingdom 'on earth'; and although he reckoned upon new and more sublime conditions of life,³ they were still to be such as would admit of eating and drinking.⁴ The more spiritual—rather, let us say, more immaterial—notions which we entertain of life after death came evidently from the side of Greek thought, which already modified profoundly the expectation of St. Paul, and through him—and still more largely apart from him—moulded the conception of the whole Gentile Church. The doctrine of the millennium—a thousand years' reign of Christ *on earth* immediately following the general resurrection—as this belief appears in the New Testament Apocalypse, was a compromise between the Jewish and the Gentile view of the coming kingdom. Before two centuries had passed, this compromise was definitely classed as a heresy.

II. *In Terms of Modern Thought.*

51. The Old Testament description of the universe pictured the earth as a great expanse of land,

¹ Mark 12 18-23.

³ Mark 14 25.

² Mark 12 25.

⁴ Luke 14 15; 22 16.

surrounded by water and roofed by the firmament. Above the firmament there was more water, which fell upon the earth as rain when the windows of heaven were opened. In the roof of the world were fixed greater and lesser lights for the convenience of man. The firmament was also the abode of God, who beheld from thence what went on in the earth, and occasionally descended to it. Such, in bald terms, was the old Hebrew conception of the universe. It was not essentially altered in later Judaism; only, heaven was then known to be very remote, and the notion that God ever came to earth was repudiated. Substantially, this is the view of the world which was universally held in Christendom until modern times. We can seriously hold it no longer. Dare we any longer play with it?

If we must attribute to Jesus such a naïve view of the physical universe, does it affect the value of his religious teaching? Not a whit. He spoke of the sun as rising, and we take no offence at that, because we commonly use the same expression, though we no longer hold the conception which it connotes. Why then should we be offended at the thought that Jesus held in its entirety the antique view of the world? Was Jesus really man 'of reasonable soul and human flesh subsistive'? And what was the humiliation of the incarnate son if it implied no limitation of knowledge? Cosmology

was of no interest to Jesus. His notion of God, of God's relation to man, and of man's heavenly destiny, he did not derive from any speculations about the universe. If he shared the views of his age, he was not betrayed by them into any false inferences about religion. Heaven meant, essentially, sublimer conditions of life than we know in sensible experience. What matter where it is? If heaven is high, that means that God is exalted; it did not mean to Jesus that the heavenly Father is not near. The eternal and heavenly life for man is life in close and conscious relation to God. These are the truths about heaven and earth that Jesus accounted essential and certain. For the rest, it is well that he thought in terms of the naïve philosophy of his people, in order that he might speak to the men of his age, and through them to all time. It is well that in order to express his greatest religious thoughts he did not feel compelled to break with the common conceptions about the world. He had over us the advantage of sincerity and simplicity, holding *one* consistent view of the world,—not one conception for religious, and another for secular use. If the universe according to the antique view of it appears a small thing, Jesus' conception of God was not small. No astronomer can conceive of God in nobler terms than did Jesus. We have therefore no cause to regret—and there is no reason why we should hesitate to confess—that Jesus did

not conceive of the material universe in the terms which are familiar to modern astronomers.

Our modern science and all of our philosophy of the universe have as little to do with our essential religion as had the Jewish cosmology with the religion of Jesus. But it is, as a matter of fact, *our* philosophy, *our* view of the world; and if we are ever to attain sincerity of thought, we must bring our religious ideas into relation with the world as we know it.

52. We need not all of us philosophise broadly, but there are some inevitable questions which we shun at our risk. As this, Where is God located? A French astronomer of the era of Illumination is reported to have said, 'Messieurs, with my telescope I have explored the whole heavens, and nowhere have I found God.' We may be shocked at the levity of this utterance, but it registers a fact of no light consequence. Must we then seek God beyond the bounds of the material universe, in a region more remote than religious thought has ever placed him? or must we simply abandon the effort to localise God?

The human soul offers the closest analogy. Men have always been prone to localise it in a particular part of the body, whether in the nervous system as a whole, or more especially in the brain, or in a limited region of the brain. We are confronted, however, by the fact that any part of the body or

brain can be cut away (except a small region which controls the heart) without putting an end to life or diminishing the size of the soul. We therefore conclude that the life or soul is immanent in the whole body, but cannot be expressed in local or quantitative terms such as we apply to matter. It is not part of it here and part there, but it is everywhere whole. The astronomer searched in vain the whole heaven for God; others have dissected the bodies of men and beasts, and have found no soul; yet a soul there undoubtedly is, though it be regarded only as the transient principle of life.

Is there anything in our religion, particularly in the teaching of Jesus, which forbids us to think of God in terms of the only analogy which can now help us to conceive of him—the analogy, namely, of our own spirit in its relation to our body? The same relation of body and soul presents itself wherever we know life in the world. Does it seem to savour of strange creeds to say that the material universe is the body of God? Then let us put it the other way and say that God is the soul of the universe, everywhere immanent in it and everywhere wholly present. This is a thought strange to none of us. Only let us accept it frankly: it is the only way in which we can sincerely conceive of God.

Another French scientist of the age of Illumina-

tion is said to have exclaimed, '*La gravitation c'est Dieu!*' That too has a shocking sound, and yet there are meaner conceptions of God current among religious people. I hardly know whether it were better to think of God as an impersonal energy everywhere active, or as a personal spirit nowhere present *in* the world. Gravitation is not God, but it is profoundly suggestive of the universality of his operation and the wholeness of his presence everywhere. Gravitation is a constant energy, everywhere operating, relating the whole to each several part, and each minutest fragment to the whole. By it the planets swing in their orbits, the apple falls to the ground, and the sparrow in its flight falls not. The mystery of the bird's flight, which Jesus cites as an example of God's particular care, is only an apparent exception to the universal law of gravitation; it is indeed an instance of it. Such is gravitation. Is God less universal in his working? less particular in his care? less constant in his presence? less immanent in his world?

53. I am well aware that with all this I am saying nothing new. Such, doubtless, is the conception of God and of his relation to the world which most educated persons now hold. But when we inquire about heaven we find, perhaps, that our conception is less satisfactory. Where is heaven? we are prone to ask; and in the attempt to locate heaven we fall again to localising God. But if we

have ceased to inquire about a heaven which is presumed to contain and circumscribe the Godhead, we may still ask, Where is that heaven to which we expect to go and in which we expect to find sublimer conditions of life than we here know? We look for it 'above,' but at once we recognise that there is neither above nor below in the universe as we now conceive it. The telescope has explored the heavens and has found no heaven there. We analyse a ray which travels hither from a distant star, and find, for example, the well-known line of sodium in its spectrum, which proves that the celestial bodies are like the body terrestrial; that though not of the earth, they are earthy. Geographical exploration has left no region of the earth unvisited where we might hope to find a terrestrial paradise or an island of the blessed. One is still at liberty to fancy that some far-off star might offer us conditions of life superior to those we know on earth. But why seek our heaven afar off? The considerations which make it now so difficult for us to conceive of heaven in terms of the current theological tradition only necessitate a closer approach again to the thought of Jesus, who expected the kingdom of heaven to come 'on earth.' He looked forward, indeed, to an earth regenerated, reborn, which should offer conditions of life appropriate to humanity reborn beyond the grave. But may we not conceive that the soul reborn, with new

relations to the world, new faculties to use and to enjoy it, shall find in this same earth paradise enough?

The prevalent unsettlement of belief in a life after death is due not to any weakening of the arguments which have been advanced for it, but to the sheer impossibility of conceiving of a heaven such as Christendom was once satisfied with. Humanity will never lack the most compulsory practical argument for life after death, the argument supplied by its need of such a life. And if such a life can in any wise be conceived, there will be no lack of believers. We ask *Whether* there be a life beyond death; but the answer must be given with a *How*. Faith can dispense with the *Whether*, if only the *How* is established. So long as this is not established, the *Whether* will not cease to come and go.¹ The insistence of this query and the grave need of a response is my whole excuse for introducing such a chapter as this in a treatise upon the Lord's Prayer.

III. *Fechner's Analogy.*

54. The analogies to which we commonly resort to accredit our belief in a future life, point, if we follow them far enough, to the conclusion that this earth will be the sphere of the new life as it is of the life we now know. The same material world in which the seed is generated and sown is the

¹ Fechner, *Leben nach dem Tode*, cap. xii.

world in which the plant roots itself and flourishes. In the same material world in which the egg lies and the caterpillar crawls fly birds and butterflies. We do not find the seed sown here and the plant blooming upon another planet; the egg laid here and the bird which has burst the shell flying above the Milky Way: but seed and plant, egg and bird, caterpillar and moth live alongside of one another in the same world. The later stage of development shares always with the earlier the same local world. The higher stage may be aware of this, only the lower knows it not.

So we must not conceive that through death we are removed into an entirely different world; but in the same world in which we now live shall we live on, only with new faculties to comprehend it and with greater freedom in traversing it. In the same world in which we now creep we shall one day fly. Why create a new garden when in the old garden countless flowers bloom for the enjoyment of which the new life will provide us with new organs? The same plants serve the needs of caterpillar and butterfly, but how different they appear to the butterfly and to the caterpillar! and while the caterpillar clings to one plant the moth flies through the whole garden.

We now see nothing of the beings that have preceded us into the coming stage of existence, and we commonly refuse to credit the hints we have of

their existence; but we may ask ourselves whether the caterpillar knows anything of the life of the butterfly, or the chicklet under the vault of the egg, anything of the life of the bird under the heavens' vault. The moth flies past and brushes the worm with its wings, but to the worm it appears an alien body. The worm must have the eyes of the moth before it can recognise the moth as a kindred being. The eyes of the chicklet in the egg are already formed, but he knows not yet their use. He must first open them and be freed from the shell before he can recognise the kindred bird under the same sky with himself. Will it be different with us? Dare we not also expect that when we have burst the shell of this present body there will open new organs of perception which we are obscurely fashioning in this life now,—organs by which we shall for the first time be able to see those who before us were born into the new life, though now already they are dwelling and working amongst us, about us, yea, within us?

55. The last three paragraphs are translated almost literally from Theodor Fechner's *Zend-Avesta*, cap. xxv., and I close this chapter upon 'Heaven and Earth' with an analogy which is peculiarly Fechner's own,—the analogy between death and birth which he develops in his little book, *Leben nach dem Tode*, published first in the year 1836 and tardily translated into English only

a few years ago. This book being now available to English readers, I here reproduce rather the form in which Fechner later expressed his idea in the *Zend-Avesta*, translating freely from the chapter I have already referred to. I hope that in spite of the brevity which is here prescribed my presentation of this theme may be sufficiently clear and illuminating, though I am aware that the argument must appear to lack something of its proper force, and the view itself to be wanting in clearness, if it is isolated from the broader points of view of Fechner's philosophy. If the reader finds here a suggestive thought, I counsel him to read for himself the *Zend-Avesta*.

The analogy which Fechner draws between birth and death is at least more satisfactory than the analogies upon which we commonly rely, drawn from our observation of life about us, which we assume to be parallel to our own. For this analogy lies in the direct line of our own development, the prospect of our future life being illuminated by a retrospect upon the history of our life past,—*our own* life, though it lies beyond our recollection and perhaps even before the dawn of consciousness.

Birth is an event which has given once already to every man a momentous instance of sudden revolution in all one's relationships, the apparent termination of all the conditions requisite to life. But therewith it furnishes example that what

appears the ending of a life may be the beginning of a new life upon a higher plane. Each of us is now living a life which has issued by a prodigious event out of an earlier and lower stage. One such revolution in the course of human development, instead of raising a presumption against a recurrence of the same, suggests rather a presumption in favour of it. Nature builds one member of a plant above another with transitional nodes between; every higher organ emerges from a lower and excels it. So also she builds the life stages of man, one over the other with transitional nodes between, each later stage emerging from the earlier and excelling it.

We commonly regard birth and death as absolute contraries, and we must so regard them from the point of view of our present life, seeing only that side of birth which appears as growth into a new life, and only that side of death which appears as the destruction of an old life. It is no wonder we so regard them, for we stand between the two: we see the face of birth and only the back of death. But if birth on its farther side (the side now averted from us) means the destruction of the old life, death also may have a farther and forward side (a side still averted from us) which means growth into a new life. Herewith birth and death, contrary as is their significance from the point of view of our present life, appear perfectly analogous

in their significance for our life as a whole. In both of them an earlier life is extinguished, and a new life emerges even by reason of the extinction of the old, the active organs of the first stage of life being abolished that the product of their activity may become the organs of a more ample life.

In truth, what greater reason have we to fear our death than the child has to fear its birth? The child knows as little as we what it has to gain in a new life. There is as yet no bridge of communication by which it might receive intelligence of the life to come. In the moment of birth it feels only what it loses, and it must seem at first as though it lost *all*. It is suddenly removed from the warm body of its mother, in which it has found hitherto all the essential conditions of its life. All the organs by which it was related to the mother, and through which it drew its nutriment, are ruthlessly torn, and soon decay, as our body later decays in death,—yea, like our bodies in old age, they begin to decay even before birth, and in this they but prepare the way for birth. The child is commonly not born without pain, nor without pain do we commonly pass into the other world which now lies beyond our ken. But it is just this death of one part of our system which conditions the independent development of another part,—the part which hitherto was rather the product of life than

the productive agent, now become the exponent of a new, a lighter, and a freer life. So will it be with the death of a part of our present system—a part which now seems the whole because it is now the active and productive organism, and because we do not recognise as ours—as a part of ourselves—what we have in our lifetime produced. The death of the part which is now active will be found to involve the growth of the other part to a new, a lighter, and a freer life.

Man lives not once upon the earth but thrice. The first stage of life is an unbroken sleep; the second, an alternation of sleeping and waking; the third, an eternal waking. In the first stage man lives solitary and in the dark; in the second stage he lives a social life near and amongst his kind but sundered bodily from them, in a light which reflects only the surface of things; in the third his life is interwoven with that of other spirits to form a higher life in the highest spirit, and he sees into the nature of finite things. In the first stage the body develops out of the germ and fashions for itself the necessary implements for the second stage; in the second the spirit develops out of the germ and fashions for itself the necessary implements for the third stage; in the third is developed the divine germ which lies in every human spirit, and here already, by presentiment, faith, feeling, and instinct prognosticate a beyond which is obscure to

us now but light as day to those that have entered the third stage.¹

The child in the mother's body has merely a vegetative soul, the principle of growth. Its works are the creation and development of organs and limbs. It has not yet the feeling that these members are its own, for it uses them not and cannot yet use them. A beautiful eye, a pretty mouth, are merely pretty *objects*, which it has made without being aware that they will one day be serviceable parts of itself. They are made for a coming world of which the child as yet knows nothing. The child produces the instruments appropriate for that world by force of an obscure instinct which is accounted for in the organisation of the mother. But as the child becomes ripe for the second stage and discards the organs of his previous activity, he learns to know himself as the self-conscious unity of his own creations. This eye, this ear, this mouth, are now *his*, and though he formed them by a dark implanted instinct, he now learns to recognise their precious use. The world of light, of colour, sound, taste, smell, and feeling, is apprehended now by those organs which he has fashioned. Happy is he if he has fashioned them well !

The relation of the first stage to the second will be repeated, only in heightened terms, in the relation of the second stage to the third. All our

¹ Fechner, *Leben nach dem Tode*, cap. i.

doing and willing in this world is likewise calculated only to fashion an organism which in the following world we shall become aware of as intimately ours—as our new body. All the operations of the soul, all the consequences of the activity which in a lifetime proceed from a man and penetrate human society and nature, are connected by a secret and invisible bond; they are the spiritual members of the man, the product of a lifetime, united together into a spiritual body, into an organism of tireless, forward-reaching activity. The soul of the unborn infant is guided by no shrewdness of calculation in forming the members of the body which is now ours. All of its labour is irrelevant to its present environment, they are of no advantage to it there, and it does not yet know the conditions of the life which is to be,—it does not even guess that there is to be another life. All of its doing is directed by an implanted instinct which is profounder and more wonderful than reasoned thought. So in our present life it is not by shrewdness of understanding that we are guided to the performance of such works as will avail to our advantage in the life to come. We do not yet know the conditions of such a life, and many do not even believe that there will be another life. But even without this belief men are guided by conscience, and implanted instinct, profounder and more wonderful than reasoned thought, to the performance of such works

as have no relevance to present advantage, but which they shall inherit as a precious possession in the life to come, for their works do follow them. If this were not true, Nietzsche would be right and Christian morality would be an absurdity, Cæsar Borgia the superman and Christ a fool.

Superman we must not seek here but hereafter, in a new stage of existence for which the present is a preparation, and in which our actions and all their consequences shall be not so much our possession as *ourselves*, the members of a new body. The soul is not yet conscious of these new members as its own; we know them as *ours* only in the initial impulse, though in reality they are inseparably interwoven with our present being. But in the moment of death, when man discards the organs to which his activity here was tied, he attains at once the consciousness of all that lives on in the world in consequence of his individual activity. He discovers the organic unity of all the ideas and works which proceeded from him. He knows them now not as mere products of his activity, but as the implements, organs, faculties of a freer activity. What was once a passive product is now the producer, self-conscious, self-directed, exercising in nature and in human society a personal and individual influence.¹

I am painfully aware that the foregoing sentences

¹ *Leben nach dem Tode*, cap. ii.

give a very inadequate notion of Fechner's conception of the spiritual body. I fear even that the conception may here appear quite unintelligible, and I can only urge that the author's full statement be read as it is given in *Zend-Avesta*, cap. xxiii. But even while the notion remains vague, we can apprehend the moral earnestness of the thought that into the other world our works do follow us. We quote in our Burial Service the solemn beatitude of the Apocalypse: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord'; but we have discarded—for what reason I cannot guess—the conclusion of that verse: 'for their works do follow them.'¹ I am not sure just what thought St. John the Divine desired to express in these words; but, to me, Fechner's doctrine appears a noble commentary upon them. I prize this view chiefly because it displays so amply the righteousness of the creation. Only in a limited sense is it true that we brought nothing into this world and can carry nothing out. We brought into this world our present body, which is the consequence of all our activity in the previous stage of our existence; we shall carry out of this world nothing which we now possess, but we shall then possess all that we have done. Whosoever has done little here and lived by the labour of others will be poor there; whosoever has done here much ill, will be miserable there, for his works too

¹ Rev. 14 13.

will follow him, and will there appear as his deformity,—so intimately shall he possess them.

56. In his doctrine of the spiritual body, Fechner is only applying to mankind in general what the Christian believes of Christ. Is it not a part of our faith 'that we shall be like him'? that our bodies 'shall be changed and made like unto his glorious body'? And what is it we believe about Christ's glorious body? Fechner says: We have in Christ the greatest example of a mighty spirit which in the after-world still lives on and works. It is not an empty word that Christ lives in his disciples. Every true Christian has Christ within him, not in a figurative sense merely, but in the liveliest reality. In him every one has a share who acts and thinks in accordance with his precepts and after his example, for it is only the Spirit of Christ that prompts such action and thought. He has permeated all the members of his body, the Church, and all cohere in him as the branches in the vine. 'For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ.'¹

But neither this nor any other worthy form of belief in a future life is tenable so long as we treat as an empty phrase the familiar saying that 'we live and move and have our being in God.' Apart from this faith it is not even possible to believe

¹ 1 Cor. 12 12.

steadily in our own existence now as living souls ; for only as he is included and supported in the divine life can the creature in any wise live. So long as we persist in conceiving of this world as a dry ball of dust—like the plaster spheres of the schoolroom ; so long as we conceive of it as swinging remote from God, in vacant spaces which are empty of him ; so long as we conceive of the universe as a region in which soul is a rare exception and souls are isolated,—so long shall we have reason to dread that on leaving this familiar habitation of the flesh we must sink helpless into the abyss. But if the life which we now live in the flesh is lived in God, and to depart from the body is not to approach God from afar but to grow up to fuller stature in him—always *in* him ;—then it is not so hard for our faith to conceive that if the house of our bodily frame be dissolved, we shall not be left naked and unclothed, but be clothed upon with our habitation from heaven, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life.¹

¹ 2 Cor. 5 1-4.

CHAPTER VII

OUR DAILY BREAD

I. *As a Rule of Desire.*

57. The first triple petition of the Lord's Prayer engages our desire in a direction where it cannot be too freely employed, upon God's name, God's reign, God's will; the next petition, with its sober plea for daily bread, sets a limit to our desire where we are prone to employ it too much. It is significant, however, that Jesus *does* admit among the seven petitions of this prayer such an expression of interest in the maintenance of our earthly life. The Kaddish, a Jewish prayer, which is often compared with that of our Lord, is so exclusively concerned with the 'last things' and the heavenly blessings which lie beyond, that it admits no mundane interests among its petitions. But Jesus saw life whole: he might contrast the here and the hereafter, but he did not divide them. His predominant interest in the coming kingdom did not incline him to account this life here forsaken of God or unworthy of God's fatherly care. It was upon his present experience of God's fatherly good-

ness that Jesus founded his hope for the future. Eternal life means life now and forever. God does not wait till the Judgment Day to become our Father: he is our Father now; our eternal task, however, is to *become* (ever more perfectly) his sons. We must not for a moment forget that every petition of this prayer is addressed to 'our Father in heaven.' He knoweth that we 'have need of all these things,' namely, the food and clothing requisite to maintain our earthly life.¹ Jesus adduces the weak comparison of a human father's bounty in proof that God will answer his children's petitions for the supply of their earthly wants, while he bestows upon them liberally much greater and more essential gifts. 'What man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things unto them that ask him?'² In the Sermon on the Mount there is no passage more beautiful than that in which Jesus assures his disciples of God's fatherly provision for their temporal wants.³ But here, as in the Lord's Prayer, it is the coming kingdom which is first in importance and should be first in desire: 'Seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things

¹ Matt. 6 31, 32.² Matt. 7 9-12.³ Matt. 6 19-34.

shall be added unto you.' It is represented as *a matter of course* that our heavenly Father will provide 'all these things,'—all, namely, that is strictly necessary for the maintenance of our earthly life. Therefore—such is the argument—we must not devote to these things our whole endeavour, but may confidently expect from God the satisfaction of the obvious needs which are incidental to our main pursuit—the pursuit of God himself, his kingdom, his will.

58. 'All these things'—when an egoistic fancy plays upon this phrase, how fertile, how pregnant it becomes! Are we not inclined to regard it as a compendious expression for all that we chance to desire? And yet, according to the context, the phrase applies only to food and clothing, the covering of our body and the maintenance of our animal life. In this connection Jesus also obliges us to reflect that the life is more than meat, and the body than raiment. The truth of this saying no man ever felt more keenly than Jesus. He was the first to perceive the inestimable value of the human soul. The things that are really important are the things that are essential to man as man, not the things which invidiously distinguish one man from another. What is truly essential to man is only what is eternally his. The bodily life itself is not essential because it is not eternal. It must on due occasion be gladly exchanged for a better

life. Yet if we fix our attention solely upon the body and its transient life, it must appear of incomparably greater importance than the trappings with which we adorn it or the luxuries with which we pamper it. It is of small moment whether a man be fed like Dives or like Lazarus; whether he be clothed like Solomon or like Peter and Andrew, James and John.

59. There is significance, therefore, in the fact that Jesus teaches us to pray in terms of bread and not of cake,—if we may so say. We dare not use this petition for ‘our daily bread’ as a summary expression for all our earthly desires. We have sinful desires which we dare not ask God to gratify. We also cherish desires innocent enough, but vain, which no man will utter in prayer if he knows himself in the presence of the illimitable God. The first triple petition is the great summary of all the good that we expect to fall,

‘at last, far off, at last to all.’

We cannot too much magnify and expand *these* petitions. The following petitions, however, are more sober, and leave no room for stray desires. They are the concrete expression of our individual and immediate needs: daily bread; forgiveness of sins; deliverance from the temptation with which we are threatened, and from the evil in which we are entangled. We cannot understand them too

narrowly and concretely. They are insincere and futile prayers if when we offer them we do not reflect upon our need of bread, have no consciousness of sins or shortcomings, are aware of no temptation, and have no experience of baffling conflict with an evil world.

‘Daily bread’ is not symbolical of all our earthly desires; but it is a symbol nevertheless,—an apt symbol of the simple needs of a disciple of Jesus, and of the simple sustenance which sufficed Jesus himself and his Apostles. We are reminded that the coarsest and commonest food sustained the noblest life. A barley loaf and dried fish was Jesus’ daily bread,—and for that he gave thanks not only in the wilderness but in the city. With like simplicity, by the symbols of bread and wine, the great sacrament of the Church expresses the conditions of eternal life. We may desire many other earthly goods, receive them gratefully, and use them lawfully; but dare we pray for them?

Commentators upon this prayer commonly make a shrewd distinction between what is ‘naturally’ and what is ‘civilly’ necessary. Doubtless there are many things strictly superfluous to life, and which to others might appear luxurious indulgences, but which to us, with our habits and culture, appear quite necessary to a happy life. If we sincerely count them necessary, we must pray for them. We can confidently ask God for such things as are

necessary not only for our being but for our well-being. But in this prayer which Jesus taught us, how dare we interpolate petitions for such things as were denied to Jesus himself, which he taught his disciples not to desire, and accounted perilous to their welfare? Barley bread and dried fish was Jesus' usual fare,¹ and for this he gave thanks to God. It would be a great miracle if to-day five thousand Christians were to be thankful for such food.

Sober confidence in prayer is possible only when we are convinced that what we ask is necessary for us or for our dear ones. The reflection that we are asking, not for what is necessary to us as men, but for what would distinguish us invidiously from other men, must weaken our confidence, if it does not quite inhibit our prayer. What we believe to be necessary for life itself, or for efficiency in the pursuit of our calling as the servants of God, this is the proper object of our prayer. This we shall pray for importunately, if our faith is whole, because the lack of such necessary things obscures our faith in God's fatherly goodness. Yet in our prayer itself we may have the experience that it is possible to forego our desire and still hold fast to God. This is substantially an answer to our prayer, though it is far from being the literal fulfilment of our request. Others may scoff about unanswered prayer, but not

¹ John 6 9.

the man who has had such an experience. He realises the truth of St. John's strange saying: 'If we know that he heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions which we have asked of him.'¹ He understands how St. Paul's importunate prayer was answered by the assurance, 'My grace is sufficient for thee,' though the very thing he asked was denied him, the removal of that 'thorn in the flesh' which seemed to cripple him as a man and as an Apostle.²

If the course of our life is so happily ordered that we commonly obtain what we set our hearts upon, it is easy for us to believe ourselves the special objects of God's favour. Yet, strange to say, the contrary experience is in reality a more cogent proof to us of God's love: we are never so firmly established in the conviction of God's special care for us as when we are steadily denied everything we most desire. This was the experience of Jesus, and it is a common experience of his disciples,—if it were not, the fewest of us could attain to a personal apprehension of God's fatherly goodness. We recognise God's guidance more clearly in the restraints of our life than in its allurements.

When we pray that we may receive our daily bread 'to-day,' our desire may easily overshoot our words. We would fain be assured of our bread for a longer term or to the very end of our days. But

¹ 1 John 5 15.

² 2 Cor. 12 7-9.

elsewhere Jesus expressly teaches us to be satisfied with the daily provision of our wants: 'Be not anxious for the morrow, for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'¹ In formulating this petition Jesus had perhaps in mind the daily provision of manna in the wilderness, the gathering of which for a future day was regarded as a token of distrust of God.² Prudence may exact of us more serious provision for the wants of the coming day than Jesus seems to allow. But certain it is that we shall never know the happiness of contentment unless we learn to be thankful for what we receive from God's hand to-day. How short is our life here! 'Ye are a vapour,' St. James says, 'which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.'³ Enough if to-day we receive good at God's hand. And is not this proof enough that his fatherly goodness will not fail us to-morrow? It is well that we are reminded in our daily prayer of the shortness of our life here and our obligation to use it nobly. The great pessimist in the Old Testament finds an argument for noble doing in the shortness of a life which ends with the grave: 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.'⁴ The

¹ Matt. 6 34.² Ex. 16 19-21.³ James 4 14.⁴ Eccles. 9 10.

Christian expectation that our 'works will follow' us¹ into a future life inspires us, by a quite contrary argument, to still higher endeavour. 'What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God.'² We must remember that the thought which pervades this prayer is that of the coming kingdom, the day of God. Therefore the word 'to-day' in this petition suggests by contrast the thought of the coming heavenly day. With this association in mind, the word 'to-day' may be taken to cover the whole of our earthly life without thereby detracting from the notion of shortness and transitoriness. 'Day by day,' if that be the proper reading of this petition, does not essentially alter the significance of it.

Indifference to earthly and transitory things,—where are we so apt to learn it as in the presence of God, in prayer? Jesus knew it better than any man, yet he knew also our need, and taught us to pray for our 'daily bread.' If we live according to nature, we shall not lack; if we live according to opinion, we shall never be satisfied. Such was a favourite motto of the Stoics, who sought to attain happiness by subduing desire. Jesus was no Stoic: he would not so much subdue our desires as cultivate and direct them. The Lord's Prayer is a rule of desire: it teaches us to restrain our desires where

¹ Rev. 14 13.

² 2 Peter 3 11, 12.

we are prone to engage them too freely ; and to fix them upon the ultimate hope of good for each and for all, where we cannot employ them enough.

II. *The Thanksgiving for Bread.*

60. About so direct and simple a petition as this what more need be said ? Yet something may well be said about the propriety of thanking God for our daily bread when we have asked for it and received it. It is an ominous observation that to-day, in spite of the romantic revival of antique ritual, the most ancient liturgical custom of the Church is rapidly falling into disuse. In how many Christian homes is the custom still observed of thanking God for the daily meal ? Yet this is a custom older than Christianity itself, and until lately it was universal in Christendom. The zeal that has been wasted in the effort to restore the use of certain mediæval practices—the use of ecclesiastical vestments, for example—would have sufficed, if more wisely directed, to maintain in every earnest Christian household this gracious practice of thanksgiving for daily bread.

How seemly it is that, praying as we do every day for our daily bread, we should as regularly give thanks for the receipt of it. There is nothing in religion more gracious than a thankful heart. Is not the word ‘ grace ’ itself equivalent to thanksgiving ? Our prayer must not be always supplication.

Thanksgiving is the natural supplement of every petition. St. Paul says, 'In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.'¹ Thanksgiving here appears, not as the sequel of supplication, but as its constant accompaniment. We may apply this saying to the Lord's Prayer, which is all of it petition, and yet may all of it be uttered in the spirit of thanksgiving. In particular, the petition for our daily bread may be conjoined with thanksgiving as well as followed by it; and I am saying nothing foreign to the subject of the present chapter when I dwell upon this thought. We pray with the more confidence for our daily bread because we have so often received it. This constant experience establishes a grateful consciousness of God's fatherly care. If there is truth in the cynical saying that gratitude often expresses a lively sense of favours to come, it is also true that petitions may express a lively sense of favours received. At all events, our petition exhibits a sense of dependence upon our Father in heaven and our loving trust in him,—than which, we may believe, nothing is more pleasing to God, as nothing, certainly, is more essentially religious.

61. There are many considerations which tend to stifle the prompt impulse of gratitude for the supply of our daily wants. Our habit of tracing everything

¹ Phil. 4 6.

through a chain of physical causes, though it may aid us to conceive of God as everywhere operating, makes the Operator seem remote. If we have not learned to think of God as everywhere, we shall not easily be able to conceive him as anywhere. Then there is the complexity of modern industry, and the remoteness of city dwellers from the miracles of the fertile field;—two facts which combine to obscure the recognition that we receive our food and clothing from the hand of God. Do we not purchase them at the store? and are they not—our food now as well as clothing—produced by machinery in the shop? If these things have obscured for us the sense of God's immediate presence and his particular providence, the better part of our religion is gone. The complexity of industry and commerce has in fact obscured for very many all sense of the prime realities of terrestrial life, the basic principles of social morality. 'The world looks to them as if they could cozen it out of some ways and means of life. But they cannot cozen IT: they can only cozen their neighbours.'¹

62. Mr. Ruskin says in another place, where he is expressly commenting upon this petition of the Lord's Prayer, 'No words could be burning enough to tell the evils which have come on the world from men's using it thoughtlessly and blasphemously, praying God to give them what they are

¹ Ruskin, *Munera Pulveris*, § 10.

deliberately resolved to steal. . . . Let the clergyman only apply—with impartial and level sweep—to his congregation the great pastoral order : “The man that will not work, neither should he eat,” and be resolute in requiring each member of his flock to tell him *what*—day by day—they do to earn their dinners ;—and he will find an entirely new view of life and its sacraments open upon him and them.

‘For the man who is not—day by day—doing work which will earn his dinner, must be stealing his dinner ; and the actual fact is, that the great mass of men calling themselves Christians do actually live by robbing the poor of their bread, and by no other trade whatsoever ; and the simple examination of the mode of the produce and consumption of European food—who digs for it, and who eats it—will prove that to any honest human soul.’¹

I am not pessimist enough to suppose that such fundamental irreligion and immorality is as widespread in Christendom as is the neglect of the thanksgiving at meals. I know that many trivial causes have silently combined to undermine this ancient custom ; it has never been the object of any hostile assault, and it has fallen before even the sentinels of the Church took notice of danger. If the common neglect of thanksgiving were due to infidelity, or to disbelief in God’s provident care of us, we should also cease to petition him for our

¹ Ruskin, *Letters to the Clergy*, ix. .

daily bread. A far more common reason for this neglect is a not altogether unreasonable reluctance to make a show of our religion before others at the social meal. Yet hardly any one, upon due reflection, will maintain that such reluctance is justified. It is more frequently urged in excuse of our neglect that the thanksgiving at meals is likely to become a mere formality. But might not the same be said of the petition? We continue to make the petition because Christ taught his disciples to make it. Most true: so he did—once. But every day by his example he taught them to give thanks for their daily bread, and this thanksgiving prayer might therefore with perfect propriety be called the Lord's Prayer.

I have urged that the petition for our daily bread tries our desires. The thanksgiving is as searching a test: it tries our actions. The custom of saying a thanksgiving at meals, if it is more than a mechanical habit, must sometimes force us to reflect how we get our daily bread,—whether it does indeed come from God, or is not perhaps obtained in defiance of his laws and to the prejudice of our neighbours. If we are honest enough to stand that test, we may still be staggered by the searching inquiry how we daily spend the strength of this God-given bread. Do we at this moment propose to go forth in the strength of this meat to engage in honest toil, following a calling befitting a dis-

ciple of Jesus? Or shall we consume it in idleness and pleasure, or—what is just as bad—in strenuous labour directed to no useful end? To our petition for daily bread, or to our thanksgiving for it, we may well add the discipline of a moment's reflection, inquiring whether we do indeed eat and drink to the glory of God, according to the apostolic maxim.¹

Though we are confident that in our way of gaining a livelihood we are perfectly innocuous to our neighbours, we must still sometimes be forced to reflect upon the disproportion between our petition for *bread* and the response which loads our table with luxuries. We may perhaps hesitate to thank God for giving us *too* much. Charles Lamb was of the opinion that the 'grace' was appropriate only before a rude and precarious meal. I have some sympathy with this notion. But, at all events, bread is never lacking on our tables, and for the bread at least we can give thanks. If we express our thanksgiving in the same sober terms in which we are taught to make our petition—that is, for bread, or the necessities of life,—though it be but a small part of what we actually enjoy,—we shall learn thereby to face with cheerful bravery the contingencies which may deprive us of all that we do not strictly need.

No religious custom is more simple, natural, and spontaneous than the thanksgiving at meals, and

¹ 1 Cor. 10 31.

none stands in a more vital relation to conduct. One might with composure see churches and liturgies vanish, if only this custom remained and was considerately used. No religious custom, we might imagine, would be so little likely to degenerate into a mere formality. And yet it is frequently only a form where it is still maintained, and this of itself is reason enough why it is elsewhere despised and disused. I am not zealous to restore the form, but to restore the reality. The reality, however, cannot be maintained without the form. It is my opinion that the practice has suffered inestimably from the use of inept forms.

63. It is an astonishing fact that most persons who make a prayer at meals utter no thanksgiving at all. They pray for the forgiveness of their sins (at a time when they are least likely to be penitent); they pray that God will *give* them thankful hearts, that he will *continue* the provision of his bounty, that he will bless the food to their use and bless them to his service. Nothing but petition! All of these things we may well pray for, and some of them appropriately at meals; but is gratitude so difficult a thing that we cannot once give thanks? One of the greater Christian denominations in America has recently issued a book of common worship to which the editors have done well to add eight forms which they suggest as appropriate for the blessing at meals;—and not one of them con-

tains a word of thanksgiving! The case is typical, and for no other reason do I mention it. No one will seriously defend this ineptitude, though it may be urged that the prayer at meals need not be limited to thanksgiving. Surely not; but at least it must *contain* thanksgiving. At this moment the question is not whether we shall have long or short prayers at meals, but whether we shall have any at all. The crisis is urgent, and it is expedient now to insist upon the one essential thing, namely, that we have thanksgiving—thanksgiving in its simplest and briefest form, with nothing added to obscure it. We pray in the simplest terms for our daily bread. Why not say also, Father, we thank thee for our daily bread? The *pater familias* who might be shamefaced at pronouncing a longer grace would hardly stumble at this.

64. I have hitherto used the word ‘thanksgiving,’ and avoided for the most part the more usual terms ‘grace’ and ‘blessing,’ because these latter words do not carry to all the prompt suggestion that the prayer at meals must be essentially an expression of gratitude to God. ‘Grace’ is a Latin word which likely has no precise signification for the unlearned, though its superficial suggestion might at least prompt one to reflect upon the *graciousness* of thanksgiving. ‘Blessing’ is the literal rendering of a Hebrew term, and it probably suggests to most people something quite different from thanksgiving,

namely, *petition* that *God* will bless our food. In point of fact, the Latin word and the Hebrew mean simply and exactly thanksgiving. They have precisely the same meaning as the Greek word *eucharist*, which we now use only for the great thanksgiving at the most solemn meal of the Church. In the narrative of the feeding of the four thousand St. Mark says of Jesus that in breaking the loaf he 'gave thanks' (*eucharistesas*); but in regard to the fishes, that he 'blessed them' (*eulogesas*).¹ St. Matthew says that he 'gave thanks' for both.² All three evangelists, in their report of the feeding of the five thousand, say that Jesus 'blessed' both loaves and fishes. St. Paul, giving account of the institution of the Lord's Supper, says that Jesus 'gave thanks' before breaking the bread, and that 'in like manner' he did with the cup.³ Yet in another place he speaks of 'the cup of blessing which we bless.'⁴ Manifestly, thanksgiving and blessing are equivalent terms, indicating the same sort of prayer. The essential *character* of the prayer is denoted by the former word; the latter suggests a peculiarity of the common Jewish *form* of thanksgiving. The word blessing, when it is used of the prayer at meals, does not properly denote that the food is to be blessed, but that God is to be blessed for it. The Hebrew thanksgiving began invariably

¹ Mark 8 6, 7.

² Matt. 15 36.

³ 1 Cor. 11 24, 25.

⁴ 1 Cor. 10 16.

with the phrase, 'Blessed be thou, O God—or Almighty, etc.' Hence it was called a blessing. We may be confident that Jesus commonly said, 'Blessed be thou, Father.' For centuries this formula remained in use for the common eucharist at every Christian meal, and for a still longer time it persisted as the opening phrase of the great Eucharist, the thanksgiving *par excellence*. With the disuse of this ancient phrase the technical word 'blessing' was not disused, but was misunderstood. It has been commonly understood in its usual transitive sense, and is supposed to imply that our daily food and the elements of the sacrament must be blessed by God.

I have dwelt at great length upon this small matter of a name because it explains—and by explaining, I hope, may remove—a prevalent misconception of the significance of the 'grace before meat.' I imagine that this misconception is in large part responsible for the disuse of the custom. It has, I believe, affected the doctrine and custom of the Church in another and more serious way. For has not this misconception of the Hebrew 'blessing' contributed to establish the notion that the sacramental meal of the Church must be blessed or consecrated by priestly act and word? The earliest Eucharistic prayer we have record of¹ is couched in

¹ In the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, about the beginning of the second century.

the form of the eucharist, thanksgiving at meals. This agrees with the traditional teaching that the only way we can communicate the body and blood of Christ is by eating and drinking. It is a thanksgiving and eating is the giving. The giving consists of food as given, and receiving is to be expected, if it be received with thanksgiving. For it is considered through the word of Christ and prayer. The eucharist then is in the act of thanksgiving at meals, and the eating is directed to one of the divine communicating words, bread and various kinds. St. Paul has to mind the same nature, but a different subject of thought (usually a eucharist eucharist), when he says, "His body which [Christ] which was for us, for his general food (bread) and for that which was, when the Lord he entered us, and general food (bread) [for his body]." The thanksgiving at meals, if at the present position of the act, is to be directed to us, to be kept with reference to it, should be done at all eucharist, eucharist, or eucharist, and should be done in such a way that it should reflect the natural feeling of the eucharist. We are bound to us, however, and yet we can see no great variety of prayer in the eucharist act of thanksgiving for our daily food. We pray in the simplest manner for our daily bread. We pray for the bread which we eat daily, which we receive in, through the bread, our Father, who gives us day by day our daily bread.

¹ 1 Tim. 4. 5.

² Rom. 14. 6.

65. If the blessing at meals is to be restored to a vital place in our religion, it must be restored first of all as an expression of individual piety, rather than as a conventional custom of the family. It will not do for each of us to wait till all agree to reinstate the ancient usage. In no company is the individual Christian prohibited from thanking God. The custom of saying a silent grace may be made habitual, even if the dread of making an ostentation of singular piety prohibit us from expressing our prayerfulness by attitude or gesture. It is much to be desired that in every Christian household, or wherever Christians are gathered together for a social meal, a grace should be publicly said. But we must remember that the thanksgiving for bread, like the petition for bread, is not first of all a social ceremony, but an act of individual devotion, prompted by the recognition of an individual gift. The family can no longer be regarded as the unit of the Church; and for this fact we may find some consolation in the reflection that the individual was originally the unit. Jesus perceived that the first effect of his Gospel must be to dissolve family ties; and if something of the same sort may be observed to-day, it is a sign that religion is again becoming more a matter of individual conviction. Unfortunately the thanksgiving at meals, which has for so long been intimately associated with the family life, does not now readily appeal to us as an individual duty.

My own perception of this duty (as a personal one, independent of family custom), and my resolution to make it an habitual practice, I owe to an experience I had many years ago in Tyrol. I was alone, and after a long tramp, in the course of which I had encountered unexpected perils, I descended towards evening to a little hamlet at the head of a beautiful but unfrequented valley. There I found comfortable lodging in the house of a peasant, and was soon seated before a good dinner of baked chicken, fresh peas, and pancakes,—which I proceeded to eat with the most complete sense of animal wellbeing, but with no thought whatever of thanksgiving to God. And so my dinner might have ended, had I not been brought to my better senses by the behaviour of the family, who, when they had served me, gathered around a bare board furnished only with the coarsest bread and a common bowl of curds into which each dipped in turn. I had already been struck by the strength and beauty of this family, and by their simple cheerfulness; but I was affected to better purpose when I saw them all stand and repeat together their thanksgiving to God for such a meal as I should have scorned, though it would have satisfied Christ and his Apostles. A trivial incident,—but it was enough to determine me not to eat a meal henceforth without thanksgiving. This purpose—candour obliges me to say—I have not always carried out.

I have dwelt long upon the subject of grace at meals, and have adduced many reasons for its use. Perhaps I have been tempted to dwell upon it too long, by the uneasy suspicion that when all has been said no one will be moved to any serious resolution. I have still something more to say about it in the following section, where I would show how close is the relation between the common eucharist at meals and the more solemn Eucharist of the Church.

3. *The Eucharist.*

66. Matthew and Luke differ slightly in reporting this petition of the Lord's Prayer.¹ The former says, 'Give us our bread to-day'; the latter, 'Give us our bread day by day.' Either expression reflects clearly enough a characteristic thought of Jesus, which he elsewhere expresses in the saying, 'Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.'² Jesus wisely admonished his disciples not to borrow trouble from the future, and he taught them to pray only for the supply of their immediate needs. The same thought seems to be reiterated by a word which we read in both Gospels alike and translate 'daily'—'our daily bread give us to-day.' This is a word of uncertain meaning and derivation, being found nowhere else either in the New Testament or in classical Greek literature. Some would translate it 'essential,' others, 'Daily' or 'for the coming

¹ Matt. 6 11; Luke 11 3.

² Matt. 6 34.

day.' To decide which of these meanings is to be preferred is a matter rather of curious interest than of substantial importance. But still another and a widely different interpretation has been current since the time of Origen, being incorporated by Jerome in his Latin version. *Supersubstantialis* is Jerome's translation of this word.¹ The reference is to bread of a higher and more heavenly substance than that which nourishes the body, that is to spiritual food in general, and in particular to the super-bread of the Lord's Supper. The suggestion is furnished by John vi. 34 ff. We cannot, indeed, accept this as the primary meaning of our petition for bread; but it certainly is not inept to ask for the nourishment of the soul when we pray for that of the body, nor to give thanks for both together. The Lord's Supper, in its fundamental symbolism, expresses the character of the heavenly nutriment in terms of the earthly; and the true significance of the greater Eucharist cannot be understood when we have lost all sense of the solemnity of the lesser eucharist at our daily meals.

67. The Eucharistic prayer at the Holy Communion is plainly the outgrowth of the simple grace at meals. And not only in its outcome, but in its origin as well, the grace had a high religious

¹ In Matt. 6 11, but the commoner rendering *quotidianis* is given in Luke 11 3.

importance,—a sacramental, even a sacrificial significance. For the earliest reference we have to this custom is in the story of Saul when he was seeking the prophet Samuel in the hope of recovering his father's asses. The maidens drawing water without the gate of the city tell him that the seer has just come to their town, 'for the people have a sacrifice to-day in the high place: as soon as ye be come into the city, ye shall straightway find him, before he go up to the high place to eat: for the people will not eat until he come, because he doth bless the sacrifice; and afterwards they eat that be bidden.'¹

68. We are left to imagine how this occasional sacrificial custom developed into the common prayer at every meal. It is certain that it was a universal practice among the Jews in the time of Jesus; and, like most other institutions of Jewish piety, it had degenerated into a perfunctory practice, minutely ordered by rabbinical laws. This custom Jesus himself followed as a matter of course; but it is equally a matter of course that he did not follow it perfunctorily. No other religious practice of the time was evidently so congenial to Jesus, so well expressed the constant character of his piety, his rare ability to perceive God's fatherly goodness in the least and commonest blessings. Therefore he uttered this common thanksgiving for daily bread with such singular significance that his

¹ 1 Sam. 9 13.

disciples, remembering him after his death, remembered him in nothing so vividly as in this.

69. It is a mistake to suppose that the Eucharist, as it was observed in the earliest time, was a memorial only of Jesus' death and of the last meal his disciples partook with him. It rather recalled the whole of their social intercourse with Jesus at every common meal at which he blessed, and brake the loaf. Else why that story of St. Luke's about Jesus, after his Resurrection, making himself *known* to his disciples 'in the breaking of the bread'?¹ Or why that story St. John tells of the breakfast of bread *and fish* which the risen Christ provided for seven of his disciples by the sea of Tiberias?² This certainly suggests a reminiscence of the feeding of the multitude by the sea shore, when Jesus performed the great miracle of making five thousand people sit down in concord to share their provisions of food.³ This was one of the most memorable meals the disciples partook with Jesus. It naturally became the subject of legend, and there can be little doubt that the first three Evangelists as well as St. John associated it with the Eucharist. The peculiarity of St. John is that he associates the Eucharist especially with that meal and not at all with the *Last Supper*. This association inspired one of the earliest and most significant symbols of

¹ Luke 24 30, 31, 35.

² John 21 1-14.

³ John 6 1-14.

Christian art. As early as the first decade of the second century the Lord's Supper was depicted symbolically in the Roman catacombs by a representation of the meal of the seven disciples on the sea shore, with the two fishes and seven baskets of bread which recalled the earlier miracle. One detail of this syncretic picture, namely, the fish, became more particularly the symbol of Christ's person.¹

70. There is another factor which connects the Lord's Supper with the common meal as closely as does its fundamental symbolism or the typical form of the 'blessing': that is, the characteristic *gesture* of Jesus in the breaking of the loaf. It has been taken for granted that among the Jews this was the common accompaniment of the blessing. But Jewish literature gives no hint of such a custom, although the Mishna has a tractate devoted exclusively to the subject of the blessing at meals. It was doubtless a custom peculiar to Jesus, and for this reason is it mentioned in the Gospels. Had it been a common practice of the Jews, it could not have suggested to the early disciples a distinctive name for the Holy Communion.² The blessing at meals had become a formality to the Jews, but it was a reality to Jesus; and we may suppose that the gesture with which he accompanied his prayer

¹ See my *Monuments of the Early Church*, pp. 233-236.

² Acts 2 42, 46; 20 7.

was as instinctive to him as it was characteristic. It must have carried also a sense of reality to Jesus' companions, that in uttering the common thanksgiving for daily bread he solemnly took the loaf in his hands and 'looking up to heaven' brake it.¹ To this act, which in its origin was unreflective, and significant only of a vital piety, Jesus attached at his last meal a new and lasting meaning. He who could find an illuminating parable in the commonest circumstance, detected in the broken loaf a mute parable of his approaching death. Not in vain was the loaf broken; it was broken to be distributed to the disciples: not in vain does the Christ die; he dies a hero's, a martyr's death, for his friends.

71. There is pathos in Jesus' desire to be remembered. And how grandly simple is his memorial! He would be remembered in every common meal! What other teacher ever expected so much? What conqueror or king ever claimed to be held in memory so commonly and so constantly? Had Jesus given them no injunction to that effect, his disciples could hardly have assembled for the common meal without remembering their absent Master. At every meal some one must utter the blessing in his place, and would surely offer it in his way, breaking the loaf as he brake it. This act did not recall alone the death of Jesus and his

¹ Matt. 14 19.

last meal with the disciples, but also the tenor of his whole life and his familiar intercourse with his friends in many a meal. It hardly needed the express command of Jesus that his disciples should remember him in this common yet significant gesture. It naturally drew their thoughts backward and fixed them upon the past; but they needed Jesus' express word of encouragement to enable them to look *forward* with hope. Jesus uttered this word. He said first of all, of the cup, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many';¹ but he pointed forward when he subjoined, 'I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'² We remember the death of Jesus whenever we celebrate this sacrament, but we have neglected and forgotten the words by which he would encourage all of his disciples forever to look forward with hope and longing to the coming kingdom. How have we dared to omit these words from our liturgy? Are they less sacred and true than the other words which we so much emphasise, 'this is my body; this is my blood'?

I am disposed to take literally the words which St. Paul records in this connection, and which we still recite in our liturgy: 'This do as oft as ye

¹ Matt. 26 28; Mark 14 24.

² Matt. 26 29; cf. Mark 14 25.

drink, in remembrance of me.’¹ Strange that the two words of Jesus which are most evidently figurative should commonly be subjected to the most crudely literal interpretation, while it may be thought extravagant of me to understand the phrase, ‘as oft as ye drink,’ in a literal sense, as referring to every common meal. Such seems to have been, at all events, the understanding of Jesus’ meaning in the earliest days of the Church, when the disciples still met for public worship ‘in the Temple: and breaking bread at home, did take their food with gladness and singleness of heart.’² How could it have been otherwise? Christ had hallowed the common meal,—for that generation at least which knew him in the flesh. The bread and wine which spake so eloquently of him were not sometimes sacred and sometimes profane, but as oft as they were eaten or drunken they were a memorial of Jesus, recalling the precious memory of his coming to earth, and inspiring the glad expectation of his coming again. Wine was a luxury which Jesus commonly lacked ‘in the days of his flesh,’ and therefore (unlike the bread) it was not so much a memorial of his earthly life as a symbol of his death and a prophecy of the plenty of the coming kingdom. Many Christians, too, must commonly have lacked it at their daily meals; and we may here perhaps find explanation of the

¹ 1 Cor. 11 25.

² Acts 2 46.

fact that certain sects—or, as some believe, the Catholic Church itself—did not account the Eucharist invalid though it was celebrated with water instead of wine.

Christianity cannot be understood except in social terms, and the Church was prompted instinctively to express its sense of corporate unity by a common celebration of the Holy Communion once a week, upon the Lord's Day, in which, so far as possible, the whole local brotherhood took part. The notion of a common fellowship was expressed by the very gesture of breaking the bread; for if this act was charged with a new meaning at the Last Supper, it did not then lose its original and always obvious significance of sharing and distribution. It meant not only the division of the loaf, but the 'communion' of the loaf. Jesus brake the loaf, not as a preliminary to eating it himself, but in order to share it. And this sacred word 'communion' was applied in early times to the sharing also of money and all other goods. Unfortunately this fact is obscured in our English version by the variety of renderings which are used for this one word. It is often translated by 'fellowship,' which justly interprets its meaning; sometimes by 'distribution,' which ignores the sentiment of sympathy and brotherhood which it properly expresses. True Christianity is always known—like its Master—in the breaking of bread, and false Christianity in

stealing it, or be it only in refusing to share it. It ought to be a solemn thought to us that in Christ's own prophecy of the manner of the last judgment, the condemnation is pronounced only on the sins of omission: 'I was hungry and ye gave me no meat.'

But the public ceremony did not for a long while completely supersede the private or family Eucharist. On the occasion of his shipwreck at Malta, St. Paul celebrated a solitary Eucharist, (and with bread only), when having 'taken bread, he gave thanks to God in the presence of them all, and brake it, and began to eat.'¹ There is sufficient evidence that the custom of the family Eucharist was perpetuated for several centuries by groups of friends who met in the cemeteries to commemorate their dear departed.

72. We speak conventionally of 'high' and 'low' views of the Eucharist. I imagine that St. Paul broke the bread with as high a reverence on the deck of his sinking ship as it is broken to-day beneath the dome of any cathedral in Christendom. I can conceive of no higher view of the Lord's Supper than that which associated with every common meal the memory of Jesus' life and death, the conviction of his abiding presence, and the expectation of his return in glory. Solemn pomp, gorgeous ceremonial, and expressive ritual are make-shifts which can never supply to us the vivid

¹ Acts 27 35.

memory the Apostles had of Jesus as the association of the daily meal. The Church can never again make every common meal a memorial of Jesus. That was the singular privilege of the first generation of his disciples. But unless we consecrate the common meal by thanksgiving, as Jesus himself did, how shall we be able to understand the greater sacrament which issued from this custom? As an isolated rite, unrelated to the common things of our life or to the common life of Jesus, it may readily be subjected to any interpretation which caprice would put upon it.

CHAPTER VIII

FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS

I. *Scope of the Petition.*

73. 'Forgive us our trespasses,' is the phrase most familiar to us in common worship. The use of this word 'trespasses' here is in a measure justified by the admonition which Jesus subjoins to this prayer: 'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.'¹ This being the formula prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer, it is perhaps the only one upon which Christians who use the English tongue can ever unite. That this symbol of our faith—the one symbol all Christians have in common—should by all be uttered in the same words is much to be desired. But in interpreting this petition of the Lord's Prayer we must remember that St. Matthew's Gospel reads: 'Forgive us our debts, as we have forgiven our debtors';

¹ Matt. 6 14, 15.

and St. Luke's: 'Forgive us our sins; for we ourselves forgive every one that is indebted to us.'

'Debts,' is the correct word here, being doubtless the word which Jesus used: it is also the best word, being far broader than the word trespasses. If in uttering this prayer we are at a loss to recall what latest act of positive transgression we ought to deplore, we shall at least be less slow to reflect how great a debt we owe to God and how poorly we have paid it. Evidently it was not amiss to dwell, as we have done in the last chapter, upon the act of thanksgiving implied in the preceding petition. For the petition we are now concerned with appears to assume that the grounds of thanksgiving are clearly before our mind and the appropriate mood already evoked. We have in the daily provision for our life so much to thank God for; how great then is our debt!

We may contemplate our debt to God simply as a ground of gratitude, undisturbed for the moment by the thought of sin. If we recognise fairly the extent of this debt, we must be aware that it can never be paid. It represents a relation between the finite and the infinite. We look up at the stars—innumerable, immeasurable—and there we find the measure of our debt. All the influences, the energies which come to us from the whole universe, all that the soul uses for the enrichment of its life, and all that it abuses or neglects, consti-

tute our debt. Yet our great debt to God need not always oppress us; we shall rather rejoice to reflect upon it, if we rightly know our place in the scale of being. Imbued with the thought of our debt, we shall never attempt to reckon our merit, and we shall not always be concerned about our deficiency. We shall say when we have done all, 'We are servants: we have done what it was our duty to do.'¹

'For merit lives from man to man,
And not from man, O God, to Thee.'

Even from this point of view we may feel the force of Jesus' rebuke for exacting of our fellow servants all that is due to us. And only from this point of view can we feel the force of the greater argument which instructs us that it is not enough to forgive, that we must also give (liberally dispense our gifts), like God who 'maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.'² Such is the goodness or perfection to which we are prompted by the sense of our debt to God, apart from all feeling of sin or the consciousness that of our vast debt we have not paid even what we might. In such a sense Jesus himself might have uttered this petition, though he had no consciousness of sin.

74. This is not to say that the word 'debts,' as

¹ Luke 17 10.

² Matt. 5 45.

it is used in the petition which Jesus taught us to make, does not also include our sins, our actual transgressions, as well as our shortcomings. It is so broad a word that it includes both, and therefore it is the right word in this place. We may suppose that this word was preferred by Jesus because it renders so obvious the analogy between man's relation to God and his relation to his fellow-men. Jesus frequently insisted upon this analogy, and once he illustrated it by one of the most affecting of his parables—the story of the two debtors.¹ The implication of this parable is that man's delinquencies in his relation to God are not essentially different from offences against one's fellow-men. It helps us to understand the nature of sin, the necessity of repentance, and the possibility of forgiveness, when we consider first of all what these experiences mean in social relationships, as between man and man. Jesus uses the notion of debt to cover man's delinquencies in the religious relationship as well as in the social; and this conception gave him an opportunity of expressing the vast quantitative difference between the two, the tremendous disproportion between the debt we owe to God and the services or respects which our fellows owe to us.

In the form in which St. Luke reports the Lord's Prayer this analogy is not clearly expressed :

¹ Matt. 18 21-35.

‘Forgive us our *sins*, for we also have forgiven every one that is *indebted* to us.’ But this phraseology makes it abundantly plain—if any doubt could arise upon such a point—that this petition, in whatever form of words it may be uttered, is in the most specific sense an acknowledgment of our sins, an expression of repentance, and a plea for forgiveness.

75. The recognition of sin, the call to repentance, and the promise of forgiveness constituted from the beginning the predominant theme in the preaching of the kingdom of God. For if God is to come, the world being such as it is, his coming must be a judgment; it must mean the righting of all wrongs, the punishment of wickedness, and the reward of virtue. Therefore the Prophets of old summoned men to repentance and a change of mind, that they might be able to stand before God at his coming. The Jews in Jesus’ time lived in expectation of God’s judgment upon the world, and this thought largely determined the character of their religion. Jesus himself stood forth with the proclamation, ‘Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’¹ Jesus called upon men to prepare for the coming kingdom. He was more severe in his demands than were the pharisaical teachers, for he exacted a higher righteousness than they practised or preached. He represented, too,

¹ Matt. 4 17.

that God's judgment would be more searching than the Jews expected. For *they* were prone to rely upon the privileges of their nation; in the last instance, upon their adherence to a sect of righteous men. They expected to be judged as Pharisees: a feeling of solidarity prevailed amongst 'the ninety and nine just persons,' and behind this the individual felt protected. Jesus placed every man for himself, naked and unprotected, before the judgment of God.

II. *Belief in God's Forgiveness.*

But this is only one side of Jesus' preaching. If this were all, his message would be simply terrible and would ill deserve the name of Gospel. The other side of Jesus' teaching was the 'good tidings,' the assurance of the Father's forgiveness. In this assurance he taught his disciples to pray daily, 'Father, forgive us our sins.'

76. The *possibility* of forgiveness is implied in the conception of God as a person. We can have no notion of forgiveness except as the act of a personal will. The act of forgiveness which we ascribe to God is the same in kind as our act. If there were no God, or if God were an impersonal soul of the universe, expressed only in natural law; in short, if we could not conceive of him as spirit, judging him after the analogy of our own spirit, we should find no place for forgiveness though we were

to seek it patiently and with tears. The notion has no meaning except in the relationship of person with person. Hence it is not a notion common to all religions, but only to such as apprehend God as a person. A craving after the divine pardon seems to us one of the most essential notes of religion, but it is rather one of the highest notes. In the religion of Buddha, as in the philosophy of the Stoics, it is rigidly inhibited; and it comes to no strong expression in any religion which does not exalt the moral character of its deities.

The Jewish idea of a personal God infinitely exalted in holiness stimulated the sense of penitence, and implied at least the possibility of forgiveness. But belief in the possibility of forgiveness is very far from being the assurance of it. Assurance was what the Jews lacked in the time of Jesus. The Jewish liturgies of that time are full of touching prayers of penitence, but they do not express the glad confidence of pardon. The attitude of the Jews towards the Law, and their discouraging effort to fulfil outwardly its innumerable precepts, told strongly against serenity and confidence. The pharisaical self-confidence could be attained only by the blindness of hypocrisy. Jesus taught his disciples not to reckon their own works, either anxiously or complacently, but to look away from themselves towards their merciful Father in heaven. 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' is the prayer in

which Jesus detected the expression not only of true penitence but of true faith. The sure ground of religious confidence is not faith in our own righteousness but faith in God's goodness. Jesus sought to establish in his disciples the assurance of God's forgiveness, and this faith was so central and essential in his religion that he expressed it in the very name which he chose for God.

77. In no other part of this prayer is it so important to remember that the address of the whole is likewise the address of every petition. Here, for the forgiveness of our sins, we pray to 'Our Father in heaven.' In human fatherhood Jesus found a parable of God's goodness. From this he inferred that God will give good gifts unto his children. But he found also in parental love a still diviner capacity, the capacity to forgive without measure the most grievous wrongs. This is not an uncommon capacity, though it is the most divine in man; it is displayed in various relationships, but pre-eminently in parental love. A father's forgiveness is therefore the most perfect parable of God's loving-kindness. The story of the loving father, which we commonly call the parable of the Prodigal Son, is hardly classified as a parable by some scholars, because it is so much more than a parable. The parallelism is so complete and exact, and the crowning instance of a father's love is so sublime, that we promptly trans-

late the whole as an *illustration* of God's loving-kindness. Yet the 'father' in this story is not represented as a rare or heroic instance, but as a type. Exalted as is this exhibition of human forgiveness, Jesus' argument is still from the less to the greater: it is as though he had said, 'how much more will your heavenly Father' forgive. This is a cogent argument. If this fine quality of mercy is found in man, how much more in God. We dare not conceive of God with traits less lofty than humanity in its highest terms displays. This reflection may reassure us when with true penitence we cry to God, 'Father, forgive us our debts.'

78. And yet such assurance is not enough. The very notion of God's great goodness intensifies the consciousness of sin, and makes it the harder for the sinner to believe in the possibility of complete forgiveness *for him*. We hardly dare ask to be reinstated in the position of a son: we say, 'Make me as one of thy hired servants.' In this crisis of religious experience we need the strongest warrant before we can believe in God's forgiveness. To believe in general about God that he is merciful, is one thing; it is quite another to accept the assurance that he forgives *us*. The strongest warrant for faith in God's forgiveness—more instant to convince us than the analogy of a father's love—is Jesus' own attitude towards sinners. The mere story of Jesus' graciousness to sinners has been the

most potent means for bringing men to God in penitent faith. What, then, must have been the original experience of Jesus' love!

The people were quick to note it as a distinguishing trait of Jesus that he was 'a friend of publicans and sinners.'¹ This trait was contrasted first of all with the ascetic severity of John the Baptist, and the contrast is no less sharp if we bring into comparison the severe aloofness which characterised all the great prophets who preceded Jesus. On the other hand, we cannot but contrast it with the exclusiveness which the Pharisees fostered, and which all persons that made pretence to righteousness observed as a religious duty. Exclusiveness was an essential mark of the Jews' religion. It was on religious grounds that they despised the Greeks, hated the Romans, lived in bloody enmity with the Samaritans, and held aloof from the publicans and others whose occupations in the world prohibited them from practising such exclusiveness. The Pharisees condemned 'the people of the land,' the simple, uneducated folk, who had no opportunity to read and study, and therefore could not make serious work of observing the minutiae of the Law according to the interpretations of the learned. No wonder that these contemptuously righteous men, in spite of all their assiduous observances, could not attain a comfort-

¹ Matt. 11 19.

able assurance of God's mercy to them, for they themselves were so unmerciful. And the common people, who found all men so unkind, how could they lift up their hearts to believe that above this dense cloud of intolerance the sun of God's mercy bathed the world?

Jesus' whole behaviour was in the sharpest contrast to the exclusiveness which prevailed in the religious circles of Judaism. The Evangelists relate that he showed himself personally friendly to the Samaritans,¹ and in one of his most beautiful parables he has made that hated name a synonym for evangelical conduct.² Jesus ate with publicans, and for his constant companions he chose men whom the 'righteous' reckoned as 'sinners.' And that is not all. When he found persons that were utterly lost and depraved—a harlot, an adulterous wife—he met them with a human compassion that was altogether divine. He sought them, not because they were penitent, but because they were lost. He stooped to them, but without the apology of condescension—so great was he. He feared no contamination, for he was so pure. And when he stooped to them, they rose. Like rain upon a thirsty ground must have been his quickening compassion. Nothing about Jesus was so wonderful as this. He who would make no compromise with unrighteousness, who laid upon his disciples pre-

¹ Luke 9 51 ff. ; 17 11 ff.

² Luke 10 30 ff.

cepts so stern, so hard, could yet be so gracious, so friendly kind to a human soul struggling impotently with sin. He who set his mark so far and so high, welcomed the first motion of a good will, the first stumbling step upon the new way. He who would kindle a fire upon earth, rejoiced in the first glimmering spark of the divine in a human soul.¹

79. But it was not only thus indirectly, by the example of his loving-kindness, that Jesus inspired in sinners a belief in the goodness of God. Expressly and with emphasis he himself forgave sins. To a man sick of the palsy he said, 'Son, thy sins are forgiven thee!'² He spake the same words to a harlot;³ and to an adulterous woman he said, 'Neither do I condemn thee.'⁴ This was an unheard of thing in Israel. No wonder the Scribes murmured, 'Why doth this man thus speak? he blasphemeth: who can forgive sins but one, even God?'⁵ Must we suppose that Jesus accepted the maxim of the Scribes, and acknowledged that in forgiving sins he was exercising an authority which belonged to God alone? It is hard to believe that at a time when he would not openly acknowledge himself as the Christ he asserted so much more than that name implied. And if this was a prerogative of God, how could Jesus impart such authority to his disciples: 'whosoever sins ye forgive, they are

¹ Bousset, *Jesus*, p. 78.

³ Luke 7 48.

⁴ John 8 11.

² Mark 2 5.

⁵ Mark 2 7.

forgiven unto them ; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.'¹ If these words are suspected, or their interpretation disputed, we have still the undeniable fact that the bishops, prophets, and martyrs of the early Church boldly exercised the authority of forgiving sins—or retaining them, as the case might be. We have faint traces of this in the New Testament,² and every one knows that absolution was one of the most important institutions of the early Catholic Church. The assurance of forgiveness lost much of its comfortable conviction when it became so formal an institution. Yet the formula of absolution still retained a trace of the spontaneous and personal character of the absolution of Jesus. 'I absolve thee,' was the phrase. Equally personal and direct, I suppose, was the absolution of the prophets in the primitive Church.³ Such certainly was the character of Jesus' absolution. A general declaration of the terms of forgiveness is something quite different from absolution. The later abuse of absolution as a formal institution of the Church sufficiently accounts for Protestant dislike of the authoritative form of absolution ; but this judgment is not justified in view of the genesis of the custom.

Backward we can trace the evolution of this

¹ John 20 23 ; cf. Matt. 16 19 ; 18 18.

² 1 Cor. 5 4, 5 ; James 5 15 ; 1 John 2 12.

³ See my *Church and its Organisation*, p. 236, n. 22.

custom, through its gross corruption and ecclesiastical formality, to the prompt response of Jesus' merciful heart. It was not always necessary for him to utter the phrase, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee': the expression of his instant compassion broke down all barriers, and men knew that they were forgiven by God. He showed his loving interest in a publican by seeking the hospitality of his house, and Zacchæus was assured that God forgave him.¹ No man that came to Jesus as a sinner ever raised the question, 'By what authority doest thou these things?' The sinner needed no stronger warrant of God's forgiveness than the fact that so good a man as Jesus, though he knew his sin, counted it no barrier to his love. It was the lofty righteousness of Jesus which gave such authority to his absolution. We still dwell upon this thought. After the Resurrection the disciples of Jesus contemplated their Lord in heaven, exalted to the right hand of God; and they knew that they had 'an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.'² We rightly call these 'comfortable words': we remember the mercifulness of our great Pardoner, but the comfortable sense of forgiveness we cannot know without the reflection that he is righteous.

It is evident that Jesus did not accept the dictum of the Scribes that no one can forgive sins but God

¹ Luke 19 5.

² 1 John 2 1.

only. The forgiveness of sins is a human power—if men would but exercise it. The exercise of this power Jesus did not confer upon his Apostles as an exclusive privilege : he enjoined it upon them as a common duty. He instructed them that it was not enough to forgive those that had sinned against them personally : they must forgive *sinners*. What is this but a particular application of the injunction that we must be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful ? The disciples of Jesus have in all ages by such practical and compassionate absolution healed and comforted more broken hearts than have all the formal sacraments of the Church.

And yet we rightly judge that no trait of Jesus' character was so expressly divine as his forgiveness of sins. The perfection of his loving-kindness places him above mankind. For this we owe him—and for this men will always pay him—religious reverence. We all of us need so much, ask so much, receive so much : Jesus gave so much. Nearer he holds to God who gives than to his tribes that take, I must believe.

The compassionate forgiveness of sins was a great part of 'the *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ.' To the word 'grace' we seldom attach any definite meaning—unless we are theologians, and then we probably attach to it a false meaning. As a practical definition, we may say that the grace of Jesus Christ is his capacity for *giving*—exhaustless,

measureless, eternal—without reference to human desert. His disciples were confident by the proof of his resurrection that he had ascended on high in order to give greater gifts unto men.¹ His willingness before was limitless: now his power is too. The first generation of Jesus' disciples expressed the homage they owed to him as Lord by placing him alongside of the Father as the dispenser of every good gift and every perfect boon. Such is the significance of St. Paul's formula of benediction: 'The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God';² or, 'Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.'³

III. *For we also Forgive.*

80. We have great reason to believe in God's mercy. It is indicated by his impartial bounty to the evil and the good; it may be inferred from the analogy of human fatherhood; and finally, the loving-kindness of Jesus affects us as a very part and instance of the divine love.

But Jesus himself was well aware that the mercy of God, though it is extended to all, can appear as a reality only to the merciful. The unmerciful man cannot believe in the goodness of God. We judge our fellow-men by ourselves; and the man who himself is governed habitually by selfishness or

¹ Ephes. 4 8.

² 2 Cor. 13 14.

³ Rom. 1 7; Ephes. 1 2.

hate will reject with cynical incredulity all proofs that a fellow spirit is more generous and merciful than he. And so we judge likewise of the highest Spirit. Nor is it merely defect of imagination which makes us impotent to believe in God's mercy when we ourselves are unmerciful. We have only too much reason for our disbelief; for we cannot escape the inference which Jesus himself draws from his parable of the forgiven but unforgiving servant: 'So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts.'¹ Therefore, said Jesus, 'Judge not, that ye may not be judged.'² Therefore, he said again, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.'³ Therefore he taught us never to pray for forgiveness without reflecting whether in our own thought and behaviour we ourselves are merciful.⁴

Such a reflection Jesus would have us make before every prayer. For he says in the most general terms, 'Whosoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one.'⁵ No man may approach God in any wise with an unforgiving heart. If our prayers are uttered in vain, and our religion bears us no fruit, it may be for lack of fulfilling this essential condition.

81. There is still another and more primary con-

¹ Matt. 18 21-35.

² Matt. 7 1-5.

³ Matt. 5 7.

⁴ Matt. 6 14, 15.

⁵ Mark 11 25.

dition of true religion and effective prayer, upon which Jesus does not so often insist, simply because it must be more obvious to all his disciples. It is one thing to forgive those who have wronged us ; it is another, and one must think a more primary obligation, that we ourselves shall wrong no one. This is not expressed in the Lord's Prayer as the condition particularly of forgiveness, because it is so fundamentally and generally a condition of all right religion. Upon this Jesus insists earnestly in another place : ' If therefore thou art offering thy gift upon the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught *against thee*, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.'¹ What our Lord says here expressly with reference to the Temple cult applies obviously with equal force to Christian worship. Jesus speaks in the spirit of the ancient Prophets of Israel : injustice and wrong are incompatible with religion ; religion without morality is hypocrisy ; justice is first : '*First* be reconciled to your brother.' Jesus addresses this admonition to the Pharisees, who laid down so many ceremonial conditions preliminary to acceptable prayer, and ignored the great moral condition.² He assumes that those who have

¹ Matt. 5 23, 24.

² The preceding verse with its fanciful distinctions of offences against a brother is an example of Jesus' irony. He is taking off

made the great decision to follow him will at least be innocent of any wrong against their neighbours. Many, it is to be feared, make experiment of Christianity without success because they do not attend to this prime condition, without which there is no promise of profit in religion, as there can be no reality in it.

Though this condition of all approach to God is not expressed in the Lord's Prayer, it is very much in place to dwell upon it here, the breach of it being so common. Bishop Hopkins in his comment upon this petition dwells especially upon the injury Christians do one another with the tongue, by false assertions or innuendoes—which are equally harmful whether they be careless or malignant. With an antique vigour of phrase which is lacking in the devotional books of our day, he urges the duty of making 'satisfaction for that injury, by wiping away those aspersions, and licking away the dirt with the same tongue with which we have bespattered' our neighbour.

But it is the forgiveness of our enemies, not our innocence of wrong towards others, which Jesus more expressly requires as the condition of God's forgiveness of us. He reaffirmed this warning when

the Pharisees and their vain distinctions. For him, sin is a whole, hatred a whole, love a whole. From such artificial distinctions, whether they be in the sphere of morals or of ritual, he turns (in the next verse) to the real conditions of acceptable religion.

he taught his disciples to pray for forgiveness. In another place he asserted that God's judgment of us will be in exact proportion to the judgment which we measure out to our fellows: 'For with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.'¹ This cannot mean, surely, that God's mercy does not exceed ours. Jesus' argument from man to God is always from the less to the greater; he would say, If you are merciful, 'how much more' your heavenly Father. God's loving-kindness to us is proportional to our mercy towards our fellows; not, however, by way of equivalence, but in the proportion of some stupendous ratio,—like the ratio between 'talents' and 'pence' in the parable. God's mercy is always disproportionate to human desert, but his justice maintains the same ratio in his dealings with man and man.

82. Even this thought is sufficiently terrible, if we take it seriously. And how can we but take it seriously when we express it in the very words of our prayer? Jesus required confidence in prayer; but confidence stumbles and falters at such words as we are required to utter in the common form of the Lord's Prayer: 'Father forgive us, *as* we forgive.' Is this indeed what we would ask? or would we not rather seal our lips than ask God for the bare equivalent of our compassion? We cannot endure to recognise in our prayer any proportion

¹ Luke 6 38; Mark 4 24.

between God's gift and our desert. I believe that we are put to no such straits, for we have in St. Luke's Gospel a more probable rendering of our Lord's words: 'Forgive us, *for* we also forgive.'

This is not to make our prayer easy,—it is only to make it possible. There still remains the hard condition, so absolutely expressed, 'For we also forgive *every one* that is indebted to us.' It is not enough that we show some compassion and forgive a few of our debtors: we must forgive them all, and until we have so done we dare not pray. Many persons, conscious of an unforgiving heart, hesitate to come to the Holy Communion, but do not reflect that in such a spirit they cannot approach God at all in prayer.

But though this is so plainly a condition of God's forgiveness, I do not believe that it is *here*—in the very heart of our prayer—expressly proposed as a disquieting condition; rather it is represented as a condition *fulfilled*. Jesus surely did not intend to interrupt the spirit of prayer—the mood of filial confidence towards the heavenly Father—by interjecting a doubt of God's response. Before or after prayer it is in place to reflect upon this condition, as a thought disquieting to false confidence; but the phrase which we utter within the prayer itself must be considered rather as a ground of assurance. This meaning is plainly enough expressed in St. Luke's phrase, 'For we also forgive.' It is, to be

sure, quite excluded by the phrase we commonly use, 'As we forgive.' The present tense here suggests a resolution yet to be formed and a duty to be done. But the correct text of St. Matthew's Gospel (as it is rendered in the Revised Version) entirely alters the point of view by putting the verb in the perfect tense: 'As we *have* forgiven.' Here we contemplate a duty done; the phrase suggests confidence, not an anxious query. Jesus, we must believe, is as much in earnest in promising God's mercy to the merciful, as he is in denouncing judgment upon the unmerciful.

According to this interpretation the second clause of our petition is none the less a touchstone for the trying of hearts. But, having dared to commence this prayer to our heavenly Father, it may be assumed that we have fulfilled the conditions preliminary to prayer, and that on reaching this petition we shall apprehend it as the expression of a condition fulfilled and therefore as a ground of confidence. It implies then an argument which Jesus so often used that he did not always need to express it: if ye being evil know how to show compassion, how much more your Father in heaven. This leads us to the surest proof we have of God's goodness,—a proof without which the analogy of parental love, or even the example of Jesus' loving-kindness, fails to convince. Only the merciful can believe in God's mercy. The better we know our-

selves as sinners, the more are we surprised to find within ourselves a capacity so divine as mercy. We are inclined to account it, not merely an analogy of the divine character, but a direct radiation of God's love. We confess that 'the love of God hath been shed abroad in our hearts.'¹ Our argument is no longer merely from the less to the greater, but directly from a part to the whole. We have the most direct proof of God's goodness when we observe

'That here in dust and dirt, e'en here,
The lilies of his love appear.'

The forgiveness of one's enemies is either the hardest thing in the world or it is the easiest. It becomes easy when we know it to be impossible. Wise reflection may diminish a man's resentment, and a habit of temperance may control his anger; but no mere resolution of the will has ever enabled a man truly to forgive his enemy. Hatred can only be cast out by love. A man may apply force to his instinctive feelings and in reply to contumely turn the other cheek; but that is merely the slavish observance of a precept, a mealy-mouthed meekness which we justly despise. That is all negative, but Jesus' precepts prescribed a positive thing, something which appears far harder, but proves in fact far easier; which puts no force upon our feelings,

¹ Romans 5 5.

but is itself the force of the greatest feeling, namely, love. No one will despise love in any of its operations. The admiration and miracle of the world is the love which suffereth long and is kind; which seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh no account of evil. Nothing in our conscious life is so plainly above our individual capacity, so evidently, therefore, an emanation from the divine Spirit. When such love wells up within us we know that God is love, we can trust ourselves entirely to his compassion.

CHAPTER IX

TEMPTATION AND EVIL

I. *Scope and Character of the Petition.*

‘ And bring us not into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil.’

83. The question may be raised whether we have here one petition or two. ‘But the matter being not great, whether they be one or two, I shall not contend about it,’ as says Bishop Hopkins. I remark only that it is convenient to treat these two clauses together. They are, as a matter of fact, closely conjoined by the structural parallelism which is characteristic of St. Matthew’s version of the prayer. The latter clause is altogether lacking in St. Luke’s record.

84. In any case, we have here reached the end of the prayer, and we may observe the deeper note of the last petitions. The prayer begins with the expression of our desire after God’s kingdom, and seems full of glad expectancy. This kingdom is not a bodiless ideal: it is to ‘come on earth,’ and

while we await it Jesus does not ignore our earthly wants of to-day. But from this we pass to a graver reflection, to the thought of the hindrances, both within and without, which retard the kingdom, or seem to render it altogether a vain aspiration. We are so insistent upon the petition for our daily bread that it sometimes seems to us the all in all. But were this petition placed at the end of the prayer, we should hardly have the heart to utter it at all. Our bodily wants are the first felt; but they are neither the last nor the greatest of our needs. The last petitions of this prayer oblige us to reflect that when we are fed and clothed, and all our bodily wants abundantly supplied, we may still be as far as ever from the attainment of happiness. Though we are assured of the daily support of our animal life, and of the amplest gratification of our senses, we have still to seek the conditions of the happy life. We *need* so much more than the beasts. The human animal is made not more unhappy by hunger than by sin. At times we feel it intolerable to be separated from God by our transgressions; we have always to endure a conflict with temptation; and even in prosperity and health our happiness is impaired by the prevision of the many evil chances which might cast us down. Such reflections serve to reduce to its due importance our petition for daily bread. Jesus regards it simply as a matter of course that our heavenly Father, who promises

us the kingdom—that is, the happy life—will with it supply the mere basis of life. But ‘the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.’¹ In view of this reflection we can understand with what good reason Jesus admonishes us : ‘Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.’²

The happy life, or the kingdom of God, is incompatible with the sin which we find within ourselves, with the unhappy temptations of the world about us, and with all its tragic chances of evil. Out of this reflection the Gospel of the kingdom emerges as a gospel of salvation. With the promise of salvation Jesus’ preaching culminates. This, however, was the message with which he began his ministry. Whether or not there was from this initial point any progress or development in the thought of Jesus, the Gospels do not permit us with any confidence to conclude ; but certainly in the apprehension of his disciples there was a progressive deepening of the conception of salvation. Only a few of the highest religions of the world can be classed as religions of salvation. Gautama Buddha, the Prophets of Israel, and the Tragic Poets of Greece illustrate in different ways the character of a religion of salvation. No wonder such religions were few ; for it is so hard a thing to

¹ Rom. 14 17.

² Matt. 6 33.

envisage clearly the darker facts of life and still to hope for salvation. Measured by this standard, the religion of Jesus is incomparably the greatest. It is so honest, great, and true: it contemplates the whole evil, recognises it as contrary to God's will, and brands it in its darkest form as sin; and yet, with faith in God's perfect goodness and his sufficient power, it expects a complete salvation,—

‘Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not,
And which entered not into the heart of man,
Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him.’¹

We must observe that in these final petitions of the Lord's Prayer we are still praying, as at the beginning, for the kingdom of God; but here the Gospel of the kingdom reaches its climax in the religion of Salvation.

85. In the facts which force from us these last and most importunate petitions, the simplest Christian encounters the darkest and most baffling problems that any philosopher has to face. We cannot altogether ignore the questions which emerge inevitably in the thoughtful utterance of these petitions. It is notorious that no one can solve them to the contentment of theoretical philosophers. I propose only to suggest such considerations as will tend to satisfy our practical religious need.

¹ 1 Cor. 2 9.

II. *The Meaning of Trial.*

86. Though it is manifest that the simple prayer which our Lord taught his disciples raises some of the profoundest questions, it certainly was not designed to suggest problems, still less to resolve them, but simply to express our *need*—a need not of theoretical solution, but of deliverance, salvation. So long as the mind is employed solely about religious interests, the problems which vex the philosopher do not emerge. We feel the facts as conditions, not as problems. In this mood the thought of sin suggests only remorse; temptation prompts to caution; the vast evil of the world inspires fear;—from them all we would be delivered; we do not ask how they came about.

In particular, we are not to suppose that this last petition is meant to suggest by its very phraseology a doubt of God's goodness. It is unfortunate that our common translation seems to imply that God is inclined to 'lead' us designedly into temptation. The Revised Version reads '*bring* us not into temptation.' Instead of 'temptation' it might be better to say 'trial,'—though undoubtedly the Greek word has both meanings. This does not substantially alter the sense of our petition, but it may serve to eliminate a suspicion. The petition still expresses our religious need of deliverance; but it does not suggest so promptly as before a problem of theology. God certainly is not to be regarded as a tempter.

The Epistle of St. James was for a long while disparaged because it manifested so little interest in *theology*. It is, in fact, rather narrowly confined to moral and *religious* interests. We ourselves, however, are learning to appreciate the merits of this practical point of view. From the moral and religious standpoint we must recognise the weight of St. James's assertion: 'Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man.'¹ This affirmation is designed to silence such suspicion as might be suggested by the last petition of our prayer. St. James writes like a Hebrew, and to the Hebrews a religious aphorism was always more weighty than a theological theorem. Such an affirmation as this our religious nature demands. The perfect goodness of God is an assumption of all Christian prayer,—and of this prayer most of all, which Jesus taught us to address to our Father in heaven. How God's goodness is to be reconciled with his might, in view of all the evil of the world, is not purely a religious question.

Before facing such a question as this a religious man will be eager to inquire if there are no practical considerations which, though they do not solve the theoretical problem, may at least mitigate the severity of its terms, and may inspire us with

¹ James 1 13.

the hope of a practical solution in which all discords shall ultimately be harmonised.

87. In our own experience we know the uses of adversity. Trial is not simply and wholly an evil: we see its uses in the development of character. We can fancy that God might at once have stamped upon man an indelible character of righteousness; but certainly he has not done so. We see God's work wrought out in time, not in an instant. When we contemplate the ascent of man, having in view either the individual or the race, we see

‘That life is not an idle ore,
But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And battered with the shocks of doom
To shape and use.’

We recognise adversity as evil, yet we perceive that it is used for good. From the inch of our experience and the span of human history we judge of God's work in the large. From a segment we infer the perfect circle. In this thought the Christian triumphs over adversity. St. Paul encourages us to ‘rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but let us rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, probation; and probation, hope.’¹ St. James has the same thought: ‘Count

¹ Romans 5 2, 3.

it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold trials; knowing that the proof of your faith worketh patience.’¹ The Epistle to the Hebrews dares to say even of Christ that it pleased God to make the Captain of our salvation ‘perfect through suffering.’²

88. But with this we appear to have proved too much. We have raised another doubt almost as difficult as the first. If trial has such good uses, why pray that God will ‘bring us not into trial’? The answer is, that we have by no means banished the conception of absolute evil. Trial is still obviously an evil, though it may be turned to a good account. Trial may be used for the formation of character, or it may yield the proof of it; but it may also entail defeat, the exposure of weakness, the detection of a flaw. A real trial or test we cannot but regard as a temptation. ‘Blessed is the man that endureth temptation,’ says St. James, ‘for when he hath been approved he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to those that love him.’³ But this beatitude suggests that not all are conquerors, not all are crowned. Temptation is danger; therefore we shrink from it, and therefore we pray to be spared it.

We read of Syrian ascetics in the early days of the Church whose self-discipline consisted in subjecting themselves freely to the hardest tests of

¹ James 1 2. ² Hebrews 2 10. ³ James 1 12.

continence. There have been Christians in all ages who in less extravagant ways have made boast of their boldness to encounter temptation. Such men have not the mind of Christ. He knew man's weakness, and therefore he taught his disciples to pray that they be not brought into trial or temptation. This likewise was his own petition.¹ Jesus, the strong man, the only hero victorious against sin, was himself afraid of temptation! '*Abba* Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me.' It was out of his own experience he then admonished his disciples: 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'² This was not Jesus' first experience of temptation, and doubtless it was not the only time such a cry escaped him. Long before this he had taught his disciples to pray, as he doubtless had often prayed himself, 'Father, bring us not into temptation.' When we utter this petition, so involved in mystery, it cheers us to reflect that it was also Jesus' prayer; for in this we perceive that such a prayer can be uttered with unbroken trust in our heavenly Father's goodness and with illimitable confidence in his might.

Jesus taught his disciples to fear temptation; and therefore he admonished them not only to pray for deliverance, but to act promptly in self-defence.

¹ Matt. 26 39, 42, 44; Mark 14 36; Luke 22 42.

² Matt. 26 41; Mark 14 38; Luke 22 46.

We remember the warning, 'If thy hand cause thee to stumble, cut it off';—and the rest of that hard saying, the most severe injunction Jesus ever uttered.¹ The austerity of this commandment is explained by Jesus' recognition of the priceless value of the human soul and the account which he made of the inestimable prize of eternal life. Whosoever might tempt one of the humblest disciples and thereby cheat him out of his eternal reward, 'it were better for him that a great millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.'² And in our own defence, what rigour of self-discipline can be too great? 'It is good to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands to be cast into hell.' Jesus never prescribed a meaningless rigour in the discipline of the body; he indeed rebuked it. He cannot here be recommending the last extravagance of asceticism. He rather means to say that temptation is to be terribly feared, and upon its first appearance must be resolutely, uncompromisingly met.

III. *Salvation.*

89. Do what we will to postpone the deeper problem, it emerges at last, clear and insistent, in the final clause of the Lord's Prayer: 'But deliver us from evil.' This petition, whether it was taught us by Jesus or not, is at all events a

¹ Mark 9 43-47.

² Mark 9 42.

part of our daily prayer. There would be no reason to doubt that it comes from Jesus, except for the fact that it is omitted by St. Luke. It expresses nothing foreign to the mind of Jesus, but rather the final and highest aspect of his doctrine of the kingdom,—the Gospel of salvation.

There have been two interpretations of this clause widely current from the earliest times. The prevailing one is reflected in the translation most familiar to us, 'Deliver us from evil.' The editors of our Revised Version, however, were hardy enough to adopt the other rendering, 'Deliver us from the Evil One.' Whatever we are inclined to believe about the Devil, we are none of us likely to exchange the accustomed formula of our prayer for this new one. To assume the malign agency of a devil—a sort of inferior god—is obviously a short and easy way of accounting for the existence of sin and evil in the world; but it is a solution with which few of us can rest satisfied. After all it does not go to the bottom of the matter. And, moreover, when such a belief is sincerely held—as it is not by us—it perverts religion and obscures the brightness of man's faith in God. It would be painful to many persons, whatever be their opinion about a personal devil, to see such a belief enshrined in the briefest and most universal symbol of Christianity. For though it is a belief which was undoubtedly current in the days of Jesus, and

has at times been woefully prominent in the Church; it was not one of the original doctrines of Judaism, and it cannot be accounted a central and essential tenet of Christianity.

But I am not swayed merely by sentimental considerations in rejecting the translation of the Revised Version. There are sound objective reasons, I think, for preferring,—not the old familiar rendering, but the stronger and more definite phrase which we get when we give the definite article its due force: ‘Deliver us from the Evil.’ Write the word with a capital, if you will: the definite article has the significance, not of personifying evil, but of demonstrating it concretely and in the mass.

What we pray for, then, is deliverance, not merely from the ill chances that may prove the means of tempting us to sin, but rather from the whole vast evil of the world, the constant and inevitable condition of life as we here know it. No other petition of the Lord’s Prayer is so purely eschatological—as a theologian would say,—that is, none so definitely looks beyond the present world, beyond the signs of ‘the last time,’ to ‘a new heaven and a new earth’ and a consummate salvation. Such being the outlook of Jesus, we can understand why he did not rely upon man to bring about God’s kingdom; why he incited his disciples to prepare *themselves* to enter such a kingdom, but did not regard their moral effort as a means of hastening its coming; why he

taught them to expect it simply as God's gift, and not to compass it by force and violence; we understand finally why he taught them instead to *pray* for it, appealing to him who alone can bring such a salvation about.

If all evil might be included in the notion of sin, and so referred to a human, or at least a personal and spiritual agent, it would be possible to imagine that the extinction of evil and the introduction of the kingdom of God might be brought about by human effort directed towards ethical culture. But evil is a far broader factor than sin. It denominates a fact which is quite independent of humanity. It represents one of the *conditions* of our life and not merely a product. On the other hand, there are in this world many enticements to sin which in themselves may not be evil at all. St. James' naïve explanation accounts for sin but not for evil: 'Every man sins when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is full grown, bringeth forth death.'¹

We can conceive of evil as something absolute, entirely unrelated to man, existing before his advent into the world. We picture it in the most terrible terms when we imagine the collision of stars, the crash and dissolution of fair worlds, an irruption of chaos which mars the order and beauty of a divine

¹ James 1 14, 15.

plan. We are more sensitive, however, to evil as it manifests itself in the organic world. Just now we are painfully affected by the picture which is conjured up by the doctrine of natural selection—the survival *only* of the fittest. It seems a ruthless method of accomplishing a good end. Doubtless we are too sensitive to this painful suggestion, and the picture we have formed of ‘nature red in tooth and claw’ may deserve some abatement. But Evil is none the less a fact, a perfectly objective fact, quite independent of our feeling; and if we will tell the truth, in spite of a rabbinical theory which has St. Paul himself for its advocate, we do not seriously believe that Adam’s fall first corrupted a perfect universe, or that death and all the evil which afflicts mankind is due to human sin.

Evil as we know it directly in our experience means all that is incompatible with a happy life,—sudden calamity, disease, and death, and the constant adversity which makes hard our human lot. With a hardy persistence which we cannot but admire, the Hebrew race long maintained, as one of the two chief pillars of its orthodoxy, the fond belief that all the ills and misfortunes of human life reflect accurately the justice of God—and so are not evil in the absolute sense. But this dogma was seriously challenged long before the days of Jesus. The Book of Job was the mightiest protest against it. Jesus himself was never entangled in this

doctrine; he did not protest against it, but calmly repudiated it.¹ This, therefore, is not a dogma of Christianity; and we may well rejoice that our faith does not depend upon such anxious proof as for ever tortured the pious Jew. Still more we may rejoice that the doctrine of Christ does not lay upon the sorrowful a double burden,—a sense of sin to match every affliction, remorse equivalent to every loss. It says rather, ‘Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.’

Christ clearly envisaged the fact of sin in the world; and that fact not alone, but also the fact of evil—which man had not caused and man could not mend. He accepted it as a fact, and as an inexplicable fact. But from this evil he promised deliverance—salvation—by the hand of God. Christianity is not a religion which can be believed in only with the eyes closed. It blinks no fact, yet in face of the darkest facts it finds reason to believe in the goodness of God and his sufficient might to right at last all wrong.

90. Evil exists in the world; how then is it to be reconciled with the goodness of God? Jesus suggested no solution. Doubtless he felt the need of none, for there is no hint that he reflected upon the problem. The one fact that was everlastingly sure to him was the goodness of his heavenly Father.

¹ Luke 13 2-4 ; John 9 1-3.

Yet almost all races of men have reflected more or less profoundly upon this problem. Polytheism (with its many gods, better or worse) was not expressly devised as a solution of the problem, but it amply accounted for it. One race, which felt more keenly the distinction between good and evil than the difference between the various powers of nature, sought to account for this distinction by the theory of two gods, a good and a bad. During the period of Persian dominance there was danger of this religion spreading among the Jews, and it was averted by one of the great prophets with a downright assertion of essential monotheism: 'That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me: I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am the LORD that doeth all these things.'¹ No one can doubt that this assertion is also fundamental to Christianity,—in spite of a popular demonology which did never radically infringe the omnipotence of God. The science of our day and the modern view of the world, the perception of one law which extends to the smallest atom and to the farthest star, requires us to believe in one God—at the most.

It is well known that in the early Christian centuries there was a strong tendency, both within

¹ Isaiah 45 6, 7.

and without the Church, towards another sort of dualism, which sought to explain evil as a thing inherent in matter itself. No solution could be more contrary to the Christian hope, for it presents an outlook full of despair. The essential crudity of matter God himself cannot refine. More generally, we may say that if evil is regarded as a factor altogether apart from God, we can entertain small hope that he will ever reform it, he will only retreat from it. And so the problem of evil is solved by a dualism which will never be resolved.

There remains for us the endeavour to solve this problem by denying the existence of evil. That this is possible we should hardly be able to believe, except that it is now so commonly done. A numerous sect of people among us, calling themselves Christian Scientists, now boast loudly of this solution. Their doctrine has cheered many hearts and healed some sickness. We to whom evil is a very real thing ought to rejoice that some are made happier and better by believing it unreal. We might well learn from them the cheerfulness which all Christians ought to feel in the experience of God's goodness and in the apprehension of the good end far off towards which he directs the universe. We might also learn from them to heal many diseases by the power of this cheerful faith. Yet even these reckless optimists are not able to do

away with evil—they only deny it. It is vain to dispute about the definition of reality. In every sense that is terrible the evil remains real, even to them. Real is the heart's anguish in bereavement, in sickness, and in death. By ascribing all evil to the operation of 'mortal mind' it has not been made less real,—only it is represented as sin. When we remember that many have been cheered and cured we must not forget that others mourn an irreparable loss, or suffer from an incurable disease. Their anguish is doubled by the reflection that every sorrow and every sickness is their own sin, exacting its due penalty and prompting a just remorse. Such weary and heavy-laden souls must welcome—one would think—with new fervour the old Gospel of God's salvation, crying to their Father in heaven (with a meaning which their sect does not attach to this prayer), 'Deliver us from the Evil.'

There remains still another way: we can deny God. Faith is not, as we could wish it, a static condition; it is rather a dynamic force, it is always in action. When we are weary of keeping up the struggle of faith it may seem easier to go over to the enemy, embracing evil as our creed, and denying the goodness of God.

But if we do this, we shall soon become aware that we have only exchanged the problem of evil for the problem of good. We never think now of

goodness as a problem, but how shall we avoid feeling it as such if we endeavour to defend the creed that the world is essentially bad? If we now find reason to suspect cruelty or indifference on the part of God, we shall then find still more reason to suspect benevolence. Robert Browning puts the case cleverly in *Bishop Blougram's Apology*, and I quote the passage here, notwithstanding it is so well known :—

‘ And now what are we? Unbelievers both,
 Calm and complete, determinately fixed
 To-day, to-morrow, and forever, pray?
 You ’ll guarantee me that? Not so, I think!
 In no wise! all we ’ve gained is, that belief,
 As unbelief before, shakes us by fits,
 Confounds us like its predecessor. Where’s
 The gain? how can we guard our unbelief
 Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem here.
 Just when we are safest, there’s a sunset touch,
 A fancy from a flower-bell, some one’s death,
 A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
 And that’s enough for fifty hopes and fears
 As old and new at once as nature’s self,
 To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
 Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
 Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—
 The grand Perhaps! We look on helplessly.
 There the old misgivings, crooked questions are—
 This good God,—what he could do, if he would,
 Would, if he could—then must have done long
 since :
 If so, when, where, and how? some way must be,—
 Once feel about, and soon or late you hit

Some sense, in which it might be, after all.
Why not, 'The Way, the Truth, the Life?'

All we have gained then by our unbelief
Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,
For one of faith diversified by doubt :
We called the chess-board white,—we call it black.'

In substance, this is what St. James says also, in a passage upon which I have already commented. He seems to be veering perilously close to the problem of evil, but he avoids it very simply by fixing attention upon the problem of good : ' Be not deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning.'¹

From the point of view of the darkest pessimism it must still be obvious that there *are* good gifts and wellnigh perfect boons. The question is, Whence are they?—if there be no God, no good God, no mighty God.

91. The almightiness of God and his perfect goodness are two attributes which we must plainly regard as distinct, even though we conceive them as perfectly compatible. It is obvious that we should have no difficulty in believing in God under the pressure of the problem of evil, if we might sacrifice either one of these attributes in favour of the other. But such belief would not be faith. We might say

¹ James 1 16, 17.

that we *believe* in devils, as children speak commonly of belief in fairies; but no one would speak of having *faith* in fairies or devils. Trust is an essential part of faith. We can repose no faith in persons that are inconstant or evil. In a god that is good but weak we can likewise have no faith. Faith duly expresses itself in the illimitable confidence of prayer to one who is able to help to the uttermost those that call upon him.

The conviction that the goodness and mightiness of God are consistent is a part of our faith. It is not a matter of indifference, however, upon which corner-stone—the goodness or the power of God—we begin to build our theology. If we start with the power of God as the chief pillar and fundament of our religion, we shall construct a system, let us say, like Calvinism,—which we must then be at pains to reconcile with the divine goodness. There can be no reasonable doubt, however, which fact is primary in Christianity. In what we call natural theology, which expresses the total effect upon us of the material universe, the impression of power may predominate; but ‘the revelation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ’ is an expression of love rather than power. So great is the experience of God’s love which we have in Christ, that no new perception we may gain of the extent or power of the material universe can ever avail to counterbalance it.

‘ For, as thereby the power’s whole mass extends,
So much extends the other floating o’er,
The love that tops the might, the Christ in God.’

We carelessly assume that the assertion of God’s absolute omnipotence is essential to our religion. But is there in fact any vital religious interest involved in this unconditional assertion? Is it not rather a barren formula, devoid of practical interest, tending only to create a problem which puzzles us as children and which we learn to ignore as men? The child is prompt to detect that there are many things God cannot do,—for instance, he can do no sin. Grown-up people silence such inquiries, but they do not answer them. Doubtless God is omnipotent, if all things are through him and in him; but is that to say that God’s will is omnipotent? Must we not distinguish a higher and a lower in God—in God who compasses all? The will is the highest faculty in man, but is it the whole man? We commonly recognise that not everything in the world, or all that is done in it, is conformable to the will of God. Otherwise there would be no sense in our prayer, ‘Thy will be done.’ Such is our common and naïve philosophy. May it not also be the deepest philosophy?

In the human spirit the will is only the highest, not the sole independent activity. How many thoughts arise, how many impulses act, apart from our will, or indeed against it! Shall there not

much rather in the highest Spirit be many functions independent of the highest will? Or does God consist only of the highest will?¹

A strong human will is able finally to conquer all inward oppositions and to direct all the faculties of the body towards the highest ends. Shall not God's will be able much rather to conquer finally all inward oppositions (man's rebel will included), and direct all the powers of the universe towards his own good end? We do not judge a man by the lower impulses which he overcomes, but by the good will through which he overcomes them. So, if we must confess that evil exists in the world (and therefore in God who comprehends the whole), we must still judge him, not by the evil, but by the highest will which subdues the evil.

Truly, if we were free to think and wish a god after our own liking, we might think and wish something quite different from what our observation of the world compels us to believe of God. We might think of him as a being at absolute harmony within himself, and expect to find the perfect expression of this harmony in the visible world which depends upon him and reflects him. We might wish that, instead of the far-off prospect of the final solution of evil, the whole factor of evil might at once be banished

¹ The preceding paragraph and the remainder of this chapter I quote (translating more or less literally) from Fechner, *Ueber die Selenfrage*, cap. viii.

from the world, or, better, that it might never have been.

The world is not such a world as we thus picture it, and God is not such a god. Evil exists, and we cannot think of it as independent of God. Knowing that it exists, we *would* not think of it as independent, for then we should have no hope of its remedy. It does not help us to think of evil as merely permitted by God, if we still believe that God could promptly abolish it. But we can think of it as independent of God's will, and believe rather that his good will has only the tendency to better the evil and to employ evil itself as a means for the best. What man's will does in the little, God's will accomplishes in the large, directing an all-inclusive and in the end an all-conquering power,—a power which fulfils God's purpose, not instantaneously, and not over every evil singly; but, endless as he is, accomplishes it rather in endless space and time, and in the totality of existence.

This view means undoubtedly some sacrifice of the omnipotence—not indeed of God, of whom and in whom are all things, but—of God's will. It means, however, that we sacrifice only so much as we must sacrifice if we would maintain a perfect trust in God's good will in its highest and ultimate reference.

No one can see God, and therefore many deny him. But of positive grounds for such denial there

is none so common or so strong as this, that we are taught to combine in our idea of God the two assumptions of unlimited goodness and unlimited might, and yet we do not behold the world so fashioned as to correspond with both assumptions at once. We have only to let go the theoretical assumption of God's boundless omnipotence, and the chief ground for the denial of God goes with it.

We may indeed say, God can do all that he will; but he wills to do only what he can,—and there is much he cannot do. He can neither will the evil, nor can he at once abolish it. But he will abolish it—as widely and as quickly and as completely as he can. For the perfection of the world eternity is required.

When we pray, 'Thy will be done on earth,' we acknowledge the perfect goodness of the heavenly Father's will, but we confess at the same time that it is not omnipotent,—that his will is not now *done* in the lower regions of the universe as it is in the highest, on earth as it is in heaven. When we pray, 'Deliver us from the Evil,' we recognise that there are powers of evil in the world which oppose God, but we express at the same time our confidence that God's good will directs a superior power which must ultimately triumph over all that opposes it. This consummation is 'the kingdom of God.'

CHAPTER X\

AMEN

I. *Significance of the word.*

We have already concluded our study of the prayer which the Lord taught his disciples. The doxology which we have been accustomed to read in King James's Version of St. Matthew's Gospel has been rightly omitted by the Revised Version. It was evidently a liturgical addition of the early Church. It is a highly appropriate addition, which we should be loth to give up; and being accustomed as we are to regard it as an integral part of the Lord's Prayer, it would not be out of place to comment upon it here, were any comment needed. But the ascription to God of 'the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever' suggests no thought which has not already emerged in the course of our study of the prayer itself.

92. Even the concluding *Amen* is not found in the original text of St. Matthew or St. Luke, but in spite of that fact there are several reasons for commenting upon it in this place. We are accus-

tomed to conclude this prayer and all our prayers with the word Amen, and we are well aware that we are following an ancient Hebrew usage to which our Lord himself doubtless conformed. But it is more important to observe that besides using the word as others did, he employed it frequently in a very singular and significant way,—about which I shall speak in a moment. Considering this word, however, merely for itself, it is an important one, and the proper explanation of it suggests some important reflections. The very frequency of our use of the word Amen inclines us to utter it perfunctorily and *without* reflection; most persons are not aware that it needs any explanation; and, unfortunately, the explanation commonly given is far too shallow, if not quite erroneous.

For these reasons I conclude the study of the Lord's Prayer with a comment upon the word Amen, and I comment upon it the more willingly because the determination of its fundamental meaning leads us to the apprehension of the specific character of Christian prayer.

93. It is a vulgar and unintelligent error which regards the Amen as little more than a seemly finial to prayers and hymns, which serves to gratify us with a sense of completeness, and to notify the congregation that the end has been reached.¹ The

¹ Many have the same feeling about the benediction, without which no service seems to them to be fitly *ended*: whereas St.

fact is, however, that Jesus used the Amen chiefly (and most characteristically) at the *beginning* of his discourses. All our English versions have obscured this fact by preserving the ancient Hebrew word when it comes at the end, and translating it by 'Verily' when it comes at the beginning of a sentence.

To understand Jesus' characteristic way of employing the word Amen we must study first the long history of its use in Israel. The word is commonly used in the Church as the response of the congregation declaring their adhesion to a prayer which is offered in their name. Such was likewise the custom of the Jews. In such a use the word necessarily came at the end,—or, rather, after the end.

To prove that this was the common custom in the earliest age of the Church we have a saying of St. Paul's (uttered with reference to disciples who felt moved to pray in an 'unknown tongue'): 'How shall he that is in the position of an ungifted Christian say the Amen at thy giving of thanks?'¹ It is noteworthy that the Amen (the article indicates its customary use) is here thought of as the natural response to a prayer of *thanksgiving* especi-

Paul's most solemn benedictions are found at the *beginning* of his Epistles; the Book of Common Prayer prescribes a benediction at the end of very few services; and the American use allows it at the beginning of Morning Prayer but not at the end.

¹ 1 Cor. 14 16.

ally. The Amen follows a doxology also in the only two instances in which it is used as the New Testament.¹ From more numerous examples in the Old Testament we may infer that this represents the commonest use of the word. One instance among many is the conclusion of the 41st Psalm: 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.' That this Amen was uttered responsively by the congregation we learn from Psalm cvi., which, concluding with the same doxology as above, adds the rubric, 'And let all the people say, Amen, Hallelujah.'² So familiarly was the Amen associated with ascriptions of Glory to God that St. Paul uses it in his Epistles after almost every ejaculation of praise,—and here of course it is not responsively used.³ In Rev. 7 12 Amen is used both before and after an ascription of praise. We can understand from this how natural it was to add the Amen,—not at first directly to the Lord's Prayer, but to the doxology by which it came to be concluded. St. Paul used the word, though more rarely, after a benediction,⁴

¹ 'And the four beasts said, Amen,' Rev. 5 14; cf. 'Amen, Hallelujah,' Rev. 19 4.

² Cf. 1 Chron. 16 36.

³ Rom. 1 25; 9 5; 11 36; 16 27; Gal. 1 5; Ephes. 3 21; Phil. 4 20; 1 Tim. 1 17; 6 16; 2 Tim. 4 18.

⁴ 1 Cor. 16 24; Gal. 6 18; cf. Heb. 13 25; Rev. 22 21. Many other cases which appear in King James's Version reflect a corrupt text.

and from this we can infer again that it was used also in such a case as a popular response.

In all of these various uses Amen obviously expresses affirmation,—and generally it is the affirmation, not of a *wish*, but of a *fact*. It therefore does not mean ‘so be it,’ as we are commonly taught, but, *so it is*. In one emphatic use in the Old Testament,—which is perhaps the earliest use of which we have record,—the Amen registers the assent of the congregation to the curses which the Law pronounces against evil-doers.¹ Here, obviously, it is anything but the expression of a wish.

To understand the more essential meaning of the word we must look behind the stereotyped usage and consider rather its etymology. A dry transcript from the lexicon may seem out of place in a book of devotion,—but it will prove itself very much in place if it enable us to say our Amen more devoutly.

Amen is used in the Scriptures most commonly as an adverb, but sometimes also as a noun, or as an adjective. In reality it is one of the forms of a Hebrew verb which meant primarily to prop, to stay, to support; in the intransitive mood, to be firm, stable,—hence to be faithful, trustworthy, sure,—used either of a person or of a thing which one can lean upon. It is used of a man’s word—and of God’s word, as well—to denote that it is sure, certain, true. Consequently the same verb

¹ Deut. 27 15 ff.; cf. Num. 5 22. .

in another mood means to trust or confide in persons and to *believe* in their word. What concerns us here especially is the fact that in Hebrew the verb 'to believe' is related to the noun 'truth' (Amen) somewhat more closely than truth, troth, and trust are related in English. To believe, or to have faith, is therefore, not to shut one's eyes and accept delusion, but to discover reality and lean upon it. It signifies first of all trust in persons, and then, trust in the truth.

These considerations explain several passages of Scripture in which the word Amen is used in a sense which appears to us strange. Isaiah says, 'He that blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God Amen; and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God Amen.'¹ We correctly translate this phrase, 'the God of truth.' The Revelation speaks in similar terms of Christ: 'These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness.'² Here the latter clause interprets the former. The same thought is expressed in St. John's Gospel when Christ calls himself 'the Truth.'³ There is one passage which proves that beneath the formal use of the word the proper force of Amen was accurately felt; that it was still understood as an affirmation of truth and reality, not as the affirmation of a mere wish. St. Paul says in refer-

¹ Isaiah 65 16.

² Rev. 3 14.

³ John 14 6; cf. 1 14, 17; 1 John 5 20.

ence to Jesus Christ, 'For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the Yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen, unto the Glory of God through us.'¹

94. Our Lord used the word Amen more frequently than the English versions of the Gospel reveal. For, as has already been remarked, we translate this word by 'Verily' when it occurs, as it frequently does, at the beginning of one of Jesus' sayings. We could desire no better translation; but rather than translate it in the best way we might leave it untranslated, as the Latin version does. We might then perhaps have been prompted to suspect in the word Amen more significance than we now commonly attach to it, and we might, perhaps, have discovered sooner how characteristic is Jesus' use of it. We may reflect even now upon the incongruity of translating it by 'Verily' at the beginning of a sentence and interpreting it by 'so be it' at the end.

It has generally been assumed that Jesus was following a common usage of the Jews when he emphasised an important statement by introducing it with an Amen. But no such usage is found in Jewish literature, and the result of recent study assures us that this was a custom quite peculiar to our Lord. Its strangeness, therefore, made it the more emphatic. How emphatic it was felt to be,

¹ 2 Cor. 1 20.

St. John seeks to show by prefacing the sayings of Jesus with a double Amen. St. John, as we have seen, had a special interest in this word: it expressed one of the central thoughts of his Gospel: that Jesus Christ, in word and deed, is the Truth.¹ St. John uses the words truth and light almost as though they were synonymous, for the truth, according to his thought, is something which reveals and illuminates. But beneath all this is the more fundamental notion that truth is reality. In this sense the word corresponds to the Hebrew Amen:

The Greek word for truth,—as it was used by the Greeks,—has to do with *ideas* and with their *relation* to facts. The Hebrew word deals primarily, not with the adequacy or veracity of ideas and propositions, but with persons and things, describing them as realities which can be relied upon and trusted.² In the prologue of his Gospel St. John describes Jesus as ‘full of grace and truth.’³ This is the only instance in the New Testament of the recurrence of a phrase familiar in the Old (where it is of course referred to God): ‘Plenteous in mercy and truth,’ or ‘loving-kindness and faithfulness,’ as it is often, and quite as rightly, translated.⁴

¹ John 1 14, 17; 14 6; 18 37. In 1 John 5 20 Jesus is called ‘the True.’

² See my *Doctrine of St. John*, pp. 57 ff.

³ John 1 14, 17.

⁴ Exod. 34 6; 2 Sam. 2 6; Ps. 25 10; 40 10, 11; 86 15; 98 3; 115 1; 138 2.

We have plodded through a laborious study of this word, but as a fruit of our effort we can now understand the significance of the solemn Amen with which Jesus introduced so many of his sayings. He used it not because he felt obliged to asseverate the veracity of his speech, to confirm, as it were, his truthfulness by an oath. Rather he would stamp what he says as essential truth—as reality. ‘He was the Truth and spake it.’ He announces what he is about to say as a thing to be believed because it is true and trustworthy. This use which Jesus makes of the Amen is precisely equivalent to a more expanded expression which St. Paul once uses: ‘Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance.’¹

II. *Reality in Prayer.*

95. In the sense in which Jesus used the word Amen at the beginning of his sayings we, too, ought to use it at the end of our prayers—as an affirmation of the reality of our prayer. The utterance of this word ought to be a pledge that we ‘worship the Father in spirit and in truth,’—according to the lofty phrase used in St. John’s Gospel to describe Jesus’ apprehension of the reality of prayer.

¹ 1 Tim. 1 15. We render this phrase neither so forcefully nor so accurately when we quote it among the ‘comfortable words’ in our Communion Office.

Real prayer is speech with God. If prayer were only a cry wrung from man's impotence by the pressure of need, and addressed vaguely to an unknown supernatural power, it would be a very obvious procedure. No one that reasons at all about human nature could fail to understand it *au fond*, and no one that has sympathy for human weakness could refuse to condone it. But such a cry directed into the unknown is not real prayer. Real as is the cry, the need, and the desire, the prayer is not real, for it is not speech with God. Desire alone is not prayer, neither does it become prayer when it is expressed in speech,—unless it be speech with God.

Human need may indeed prompt to prayer, but it is not the only motive. In our collect for the Third Sunday after Trinity we confess that God has given us 'a hearty desire to pray.' It may seem as if this phrase were too strong a one for us to apply to ourselves, irked as we often are by the public prayers of the Church, and sometimes prompted to our private devotions rather by a sense of duty than by desire. Yet in point of fact there is hardly any trait more universal among men than the desire to hold intercourse with an assumed supernatural society. This desire is the source of all religion. By way of comparison we may remark that what we may call our social faculties assume the fact of a relationship with our

fellow-men, and prompt the desire to hold intercourse with them. Likewise the religious faculty assumes the fact of a relationship with a supernatural society and prompts the desire to hold intercourse with God, to speak to him and receive an answer back. The one faculty is as real as the other, and according to the currently accepted principles of biological science it must be conceded that there corresponds to each—to the religious as well as to the social faculty—a real environment which has conditioned the development of the faculty in question. The environment which corresponds to our religious faculty is God, the Spirit in whom we live and move and have our being, who compasseth us before and behind, who possesseth our reins. It is this divine environment which has educed the religious faculty, and which stimulates the desire to pray. Not our need alone, but also the sense of God's presence prompts us to pray—that is, to speak to God. And the bare sense of need, though it may prompt us to pray, does not enable us to pray. Real prayer is impossible without a sense of God's presence.¹

96. How then can we attain a sense of the reality of God's presence? First of all it needs to be said

¹ This last paragraph, and indeed what I have to say about prayer in the remainder of this chapter, is largely suggested by an article by Prof. W. Hermann entitled 'Gebet' in Herzog's *Realencyklopädie*, 3rd Edition.

that mere teaching about God does not give us such assurance as we need of his presence. A Man who has himself received no revelation of God cannot pray. We must know some experience wherein we are conscious of the reality of God. No man lives in the constant light of such a revealing experience, yet in Christendom none need be without a direct experience of God and a personal revelation. Such an incomparable experience being once ours, we can recall it by the power of recollection, and by meditation upon it we can renew in ourselves the consciousness of God's presence. Not that meditation itself is prayer. We are only too prone to rest satisfied with meditation in place of Prayer. Meditation is an exercise of our own psychic power, a purely human effort: it is not a laying hold upon God's power. Yet meditation of the sort I have in mind is effectively the continuation of an experience in which God's power was once made known in our life, and out of it flows the consciousness that God is present. Then we *can* speak to him—and then indeed we *must*.

97. In the Church of God we cannot too earnestly admonish men to pray; for all that Christians can accomplish of abiding worth springs from prayer. Yet by exhortation to prayer men are often brought merely to the performance of a formal function; and this to an honest mind may be an excruciating

misery. Out of this unhappy position a man can hardly extricate himself, if in all that is told him about prayer he is systematically debarred from the apprehension that the revelation of God must be for each man his own experience, for which mere teaching about God is no substitute. We may exhort men to pray, but we must never encourage them to suppose that it depends solely upon their own volition whether they pray or not. In Hamlet's stepfather Shakespeare has graphically depicted the situation of a man who cannot pray.¹ His inclination to pray is 'sharp' like his need; he recalls all the reasons that are apt to encourage man to pray; but he cannot pray because he cannot repent. He once had his revelation of God, but he spurned it; and the memory of God's gracious revelation once spurned is so far from helping us to pray that it rather forms a barrier between us and God.² We may exhort men to pray, but we must at the same time help them to pray. The contagion of one man's faith and experience enables others to apprehend God as present in reality. The experience which Jesus had of the living presence of his heavenly Father is the inspiration to prayer which springs perennial in the Christian Church. Through Christendom there flows a living stream of tradition from which every individual may draw the vital experience of God which incites and enables him to

¹ *Hamlet*, Act III. Sc. 3.

² Heb. 12 17.

pray. Those who never have come into contact with the vital forces of Christendom, or those who deliberately hold aloof from the stream of influence which flows from Christ, we cannot exhort to prayer till we have brought them first into the fellowship of the Church. We need in our missionary effort to be more mindful than we are of the fact that the liturgical exhortation, 'Let us pray,' is addressed to the Church. Early Catholicism was well aware that Christianity requires a novitiate—not only an act of initiation, but a term of preparation—and that the prayers of the Church are not an instrument of missionary propaganda. It cannot now be assumed that all persons who congregate in our churches are able to say Amen to our prayers, for there is hardly any assembly of the Church which has not a missionary aim. *All* can utter this word if they conceive it to be merely the expression of a wish; not all can honestly utter it, however, if they recognise it as a pledge of the reality of prayer in the personal experience of God's presence.

III. *Science and Prayer.*

Prayer, if it is veritably speech with God, introduces us into a new world of reality. The experience of holding speech with God lifts us above ourselves and all the world of sensible reality in which we are commonly conscious of living. The religious life affords no joy so great as we

experience in true prayer. In this joy itself we may often find the unlooked-for but substantial answer to our petition. For if we ask for deliverance from the evil world, or from the particular evils that at the moment oppress us, we already experience deliverance in prayer itself, in the sense that a refuge is open to us in an underlying and all-compassing world of spiritual reality. In prayer we appropriate an inestimable power drawn from that other world. But for all that, our sense of the reality of prayer is profoundly shattered if we conceive that God hears us but cannot answer, and that in response to our prayer no change occurs in the world of sensible experience.

98. It cannot be denied that modern science with its conception of the uniformity of natural law has seriously endangered man's faith in the efficacy and reality of prayer. We must recognise, however, that it has affected our conception of prayer not altogether for the worse. Some of the men who in the generation now passed uttered the profoundest and most momentous words upon religion were inclined to hail with joy the liberation which science brought them from the depraved notion that prayer is an energetic wish which is potent to subdue to man's individual will the eternal and all-embracing purpose of God. We shall never again conceive that God and nature are the sport of our desires. The world is one, and we cannot ask any-

thing that is so little but it will affect the whole universe for ever.

The sense of joy at our liberation from a false notion of prayer may easily obscure our perception that prayer itself is endangered. In fact it is religion itself that is endangered when we are disposed to think of God no longer as a Spirit who responds to us personally, but as the unalterable force of nature. It is quite possible to conceive that, in accordance with the operation of natural law, prayer may have a reflex influence upon our own mind; but it is indubitable that holding this conception we shall never be able to pray. If we resign ourselves to the notion that our prayer warms us alone and leaves all else as it was, the energy of faith will be crippled where it most should express itself. Prayer would then be no longer a cry for divine assistance, but merely a particular way of self-help.

To avoid this inference we are fain to distinguish between the inward life of the soul and outward circumstance, fondly cherishing the notion that in answer to prayer there may be wrought by God a change in our soul, the while our outward fate remains unchanged, the fixed result of natural law. This distinction, however, will not hold. We have no ground for positing such a contrast as this between psychic phenomena on one hand and nature on the other. We are obliged to reflect that psychic changes result in an impression upon the outward

world ; and, on the other hand, that the soul itself is affected by the material world about it, and all psychic changes are conditioned by changes in the brain.

99. From this, however, we are not compelled to draw the sad inference that an iron necessity rules us within as well as without. To recognise the close relation of soul and body is not to confess that there is no soul. As well might we argue that there is no body. What we know most surely is ourselves, and we know ourselves as soul, as self-moving and sentient spirit. No other experience can invalidate this primary intuition. We can observe, indeed, that our free spiritual activity as it is exercised upon the outward world interrupts in no wise the operation of physical laws. We perform no miracle when we lift a weight, for the physical effect which we accomplish is accurately balanced by physical causes—we do not annul the law of gravitation, but we direct other natural forces which avail to counterbalance it. On the other hand, though the freedom of our action is in many ways circumscribed by physical forces, we do not reckon that the freedom of our will is thereby annulled. The liberty of God's action is not circumscribed like ours. Why then should we fancy that God's liberty is annulled by the fact that, like ours, it operates without prejudice to the law of cause and effect ?

If we start with the common prejudice that the world is a mass of inert matter, mere body without a soul, it is not at all illogical to infer that our bodies are also soulless. But why do we not rather start with what we most surely know, and argue that, since in our limited bodies we can perform free acts in accordance with physical laws, therefore in the great world body (of which we are a part) God can perform his will, in us and about us, in perfect conformity with law, but none the less with perfect freedom? In fact, we ask no miracle when we expect that God will answer our prayers. The cause of our perplexity is not our recognition of the uniformity of natural law, but the contradiction in which we set nature and God, body and soul, matter and spirit. We do well to distinguish them, but to distinguish is not to divide.

Science cannot hinder us from prayer; it can only rectify and enrich our conception of what it is to pray. The thought of nature and the boundless contingency of cause and effect must shatter the confidence of such prayer as is only the expression of our individual wish, aiming to control the course of the universe for our own ends. That notion is unendurable quite apart from any objections that may be raised from the side of science. But such thoughts have no force against true prayer,—the prayer which seeks to ‘apprehend that for which also we are apprehended of God.’ Such

prayer leaves room for the conception of nature and natural law in the sphere of sensible and demonstrable reality. We merely affirm that these conceptions represent not the whole reality but that part of it only which is demonstrable to the senses.

100. The thought of the boundless contingency of every happening in the sensible world need not disturb us when we pray. To us the world is boundless and every happening incalculable; but to God it is a whole and all happenings have unity in his final purpose. These thoughts, instead of discouraging us, ought rather to suggest that prayer, if it has any effect at all, within or without, has an effect immeasurable and eternal, determining the course and consummation of the universe. He who has experienced proof of God's fatherly love cannot doubt that true prayer, the seeking of a child after his heavenly Father, indicates the direction in which God disposes the world-development. We pray in truth when we speak to God in order to draw nearer to him. True prayer expresses the hidden tendency of all moral effort. To such prayer God has given the power to fashion the world of the future. All human effort which has not the tendency of true prayer leaves everything essentially as it was. God makes a definite response to prayer; for upon the yearning of his children after him, upon their moral effort, and upon their

prayer, God has conditioned the progress of the human race, the whole world-development, and the world-end.

These thoughts about prayer we properly express in our Amen. The word signifies the reality of our intercourse with God and our confidence that this intercourse is not in vain. Our confidence in God's power to do whatsoever in the end may be good for us and for all, we fitly express in the words with which we commonly conclude the Lord's Prayer, 'For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory for ever and ever. Amen.'

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